

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
Brigham Young University-Idaho

DAVID O. MCKAY LIBRARY



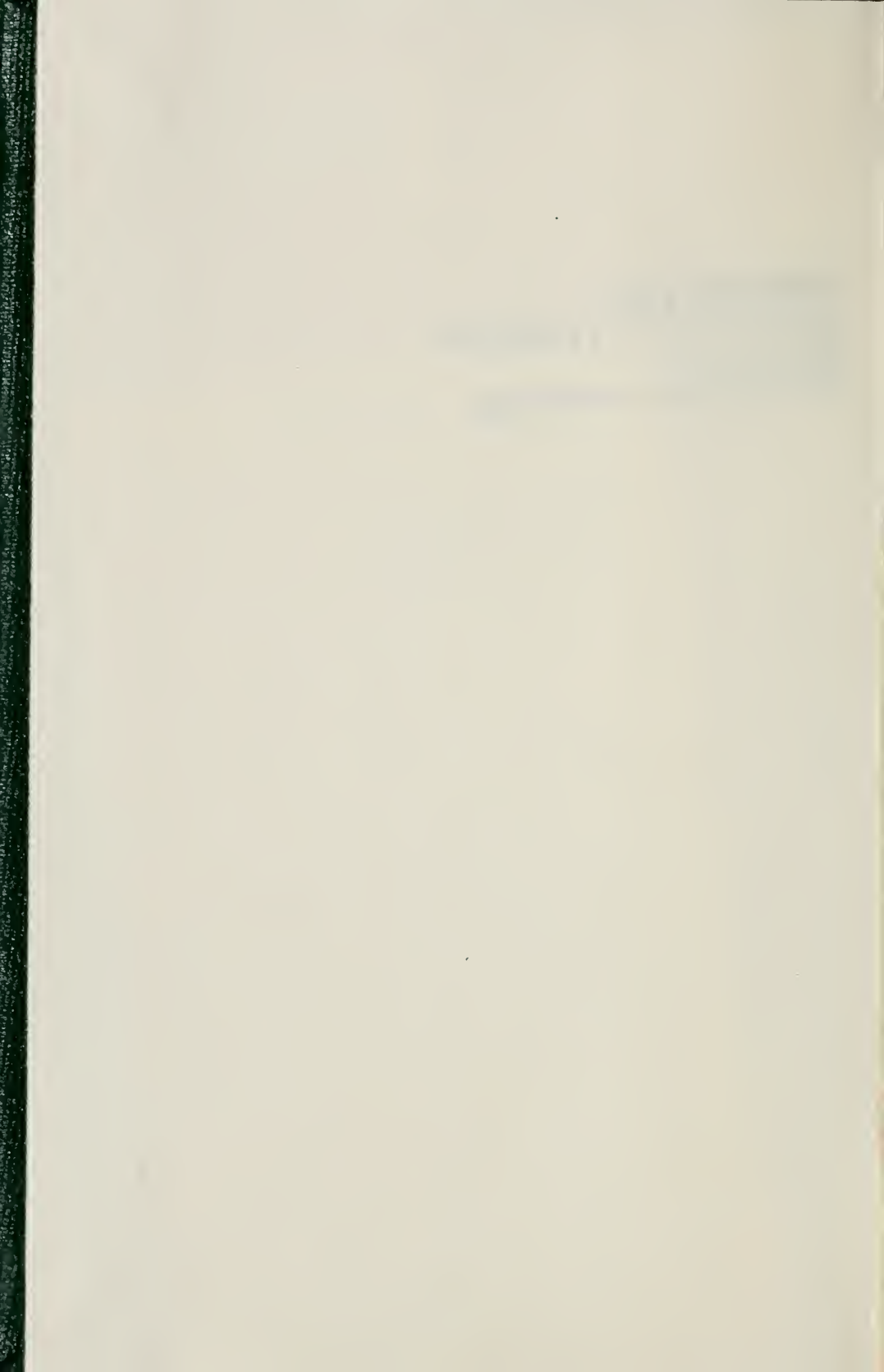
3 1404 00734 4275

PROPERTY OF:
DAVID O. MCKAY LIBRARY
BYU-IDAHO
REXBURG II

DATE DUE

MAR 25 2006
APR 7 2006

LEC 4 2002



77
**PROPERTY OF:
DAVID O. McKAY LIBRARY
BYU-IDAHO
REXBURG ID 83460-0405**

PROPERTY OF
DAVID O. MCKAY LIBRARY
BYU-IDAHO
REXBURG ID 83460-0402



A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES



Beneath the Tower of the Seven Floors

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

A COLLECTION FOR USE IN HIGH SCHOOLS, COM-
PILED AND EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND
NOTES, AND BIOGRAPHIES OF THE AUTHORS

BY

BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS, PH.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN HUNTER COLLEGE OF THE CITY OF
NEW YORK; INSTRUCTOR IN SHORT-STORY WRITING, COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY (EXTENSION TEACHING AND SUMMER SESSION)

AUTHOR OF "A HANDBOOK ON STORY WRITING," ETC.

5928




ILLUSTRATED

Short Story Index

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK LONDON

1919



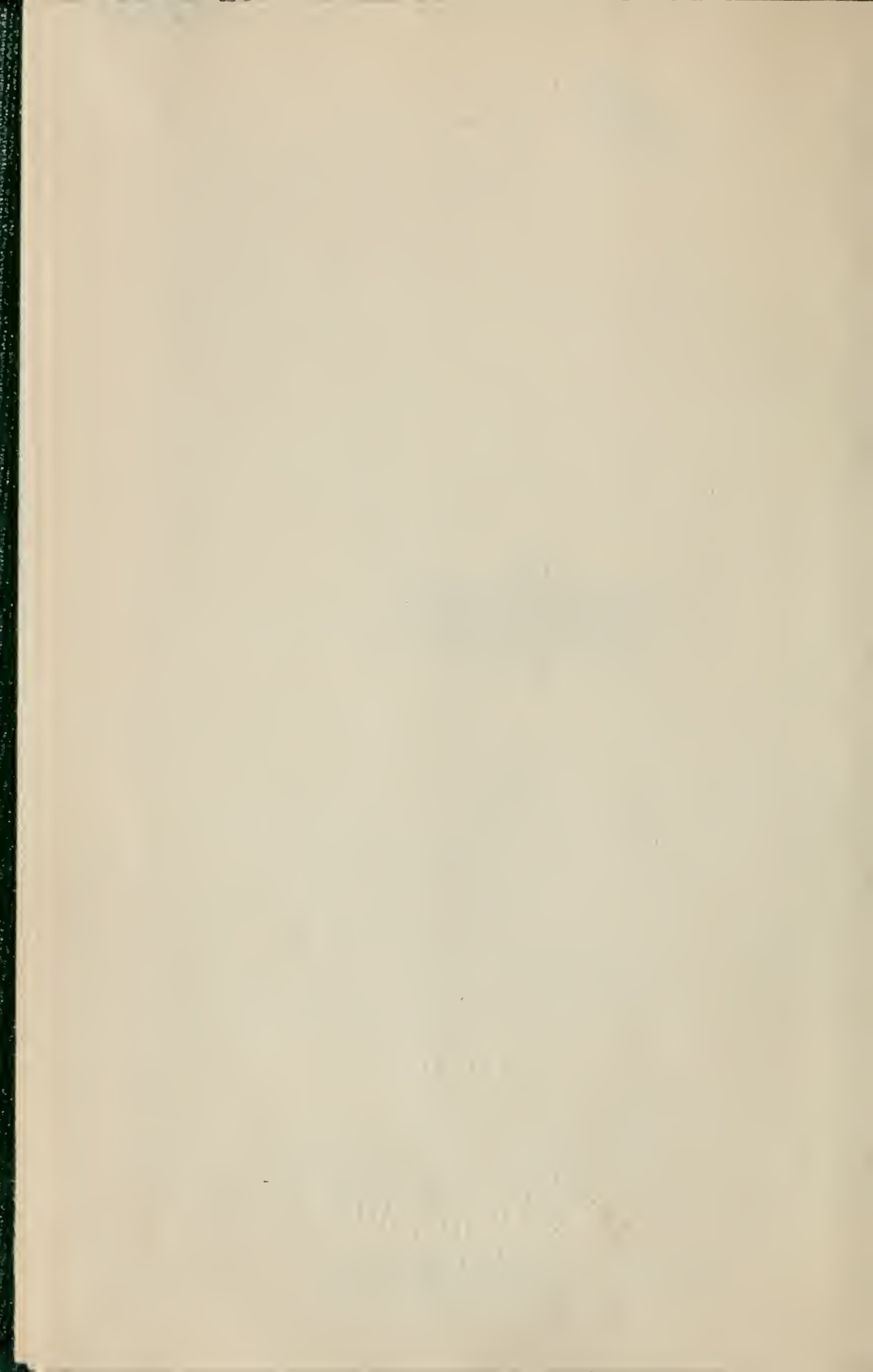
Copyright, 1918, by
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

Printed in the United States of America

5928

TO
MARY BLANCHE

Rec
FEB 17 1954



PREFACE

In preparing a collection of short-stories for use in high schools, the editor has kept in mind certain guiding principles and purposes. Since the first end of good fiction is entertainment, the deduction follows that fictive material presented to students should be interesting—interesting to them. As far as possible, therefore, this requisite has received prime attention. In choosing between two stories, the editor has respected the judgment of high school teachers, and has invited, also, the opinions of young readers. Their expressed preferences have been considered duly in effecting a final choice.

A second object should be to suggest by chronological selection something of the development of the modern short-story; and it will be observed that the range of the collection here offered extends from 1832 to 1917, the period of evolution of this literary form. Succeeding years will show, of course, further changes.

Third, the list should be cosmopolitan in range of locality, as well as catholic in narrative type and in literary quality. The writers chosen, therefore, are from the East, the West, and the South of the United States, from France and from England; their stories represent not only these sections and countries but also Italy and Spain.

As to types, the story of local color, of character, of atmosphere and of plot finds each its representative more than once; in a number of examples there exists a nice proportion of these distinctive elements. In length, the variation is from the 1,500 words of "On the Stairs," to the 10,000 words, and more, of "Molly McGuire, Fourteen." Further, the illustrations balance realism with romanticism: Mary Wilkins Freeman and Hamlin Garland, for instance, offset Edgar Allan Poe and Robert Louis Stevenson.

PREFACE

Variety in tone has been sought as an aid to interest. For obvious reasons, although the gayer mood is included, it has seemed preferable to let the balance lie with the serious, even the tragic, rather than with the light or humorous.

In addition to the requirements thus hypothesized, something about the life of each author is needed for reference or study. The editor has compiled, accordingly, brief biographies, using the best available sources and drawing freely upon them. In connection with each story and biography, a list of further narratives is appended, a list having kinship in one way or other with the story at hand. It is hoped that students having time and library facilities will extend their reading in the field of this modern type of fiction.

The notes tucked away at the back of the volume may be of service to the student or teacher who is desirous of that analytical help which leads toward construction. Most pupils who read stories are also trying to write them.

It is a pleasure to record thanks and acknowledgments to authors and publishers who have permitted use of the stories here incorporated, and also to the artists and photographers whose aid has helped to make the volume attractive.

BLANCHE COLTON WILLIAMS.

New York City.

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Legend of the Moor's Legacy," from "The Alhambra," by Washington Irving, is reprinted from the text of the first edition, Lea and Carey, Philadelphia, 1832.

"The Cask of Amontillado," by Edgar Allan Poe, first appeared in Godey's *Lady's Book*, November, 1846.

"Tennessee's Partner," by Bret Harte, first appeared in *The Overland*, October, 1869. Thanks are due Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin and Company, the publishers of Bret Harte's works, for permission to reprint the story in this collection.

"The Last Lesson," by Alphonse Daudet, is one of the "Contes du lundi," which was published in 1873. The present translation is by the editor.

"The Sire de Malétroit's Door," by Robert Louis Stevenson, first appeared in *Temple Bar*, January, 1878. It was incorporated later in "New Arabian Nights." Acknowledgment is made to Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, for the use of the text of their edition of Stevenson's works.

"The Necklace," by Guy de Maupassant, first appeared in *Le Gaulois*, February 17, 1884. The present translation is by the editor.

"A Gala Dress," from "A New England Nun and Other Stories," by Mary Wilkins Freeman, copyright by Harper and Brothers, New York, 1891. The story is reproduced by special arrangement with the author and the publishers.

"Under the Lion's Paw," by Hamlin Garland, originally published in *Harper's Weekly*, is one of the series in "Main-Travelled Roads," 1891. The text used is that of the edition

of 1898, Stone and Company, New York and Chicago, and it is reproduced here by special arrangement with the author.

"On the Stairs," by Arthur Morrison, is one of the "Tales of Mean Streets," copyright by R. F. Fenno and Company, New York, 1895. Thanks are due the publishers for their kind permission to reprint the text.

"A Blackjack Bargainer," by O. Henry, was published first in *Munsey's*, August, 1901, and later incorporated in "Whirligigs." It is reprinted here from the text of 1910, Doubleday, Page and Company, Garden City, New York, by special arrangement with the publishers.

"The Well," from the collection, "The Lady of the Barge," by W. W. Jacobs, copyright 1902, by Dodd, Mead and Company, New York. Thanks are due the publishers for their kind permission to reprint the text.

"The Comforter," by Elizabeth Jordan, was published in *Harper's Magazine*, March, 1914, and is reproduced here by special arrangement with the author and the publishers, Messrs. Harper and Brothers, New York.

"Molly McGuire, Fourteen," by Frederick Stuart Greene. This story was published in *The Century*, September, 1917. It is here reproduced by special permission of the author and the publishers, The Century Company, New York.

Especially thanks are due to Brown Brothers, Photographers, who kindly furnished the photographs of authors.

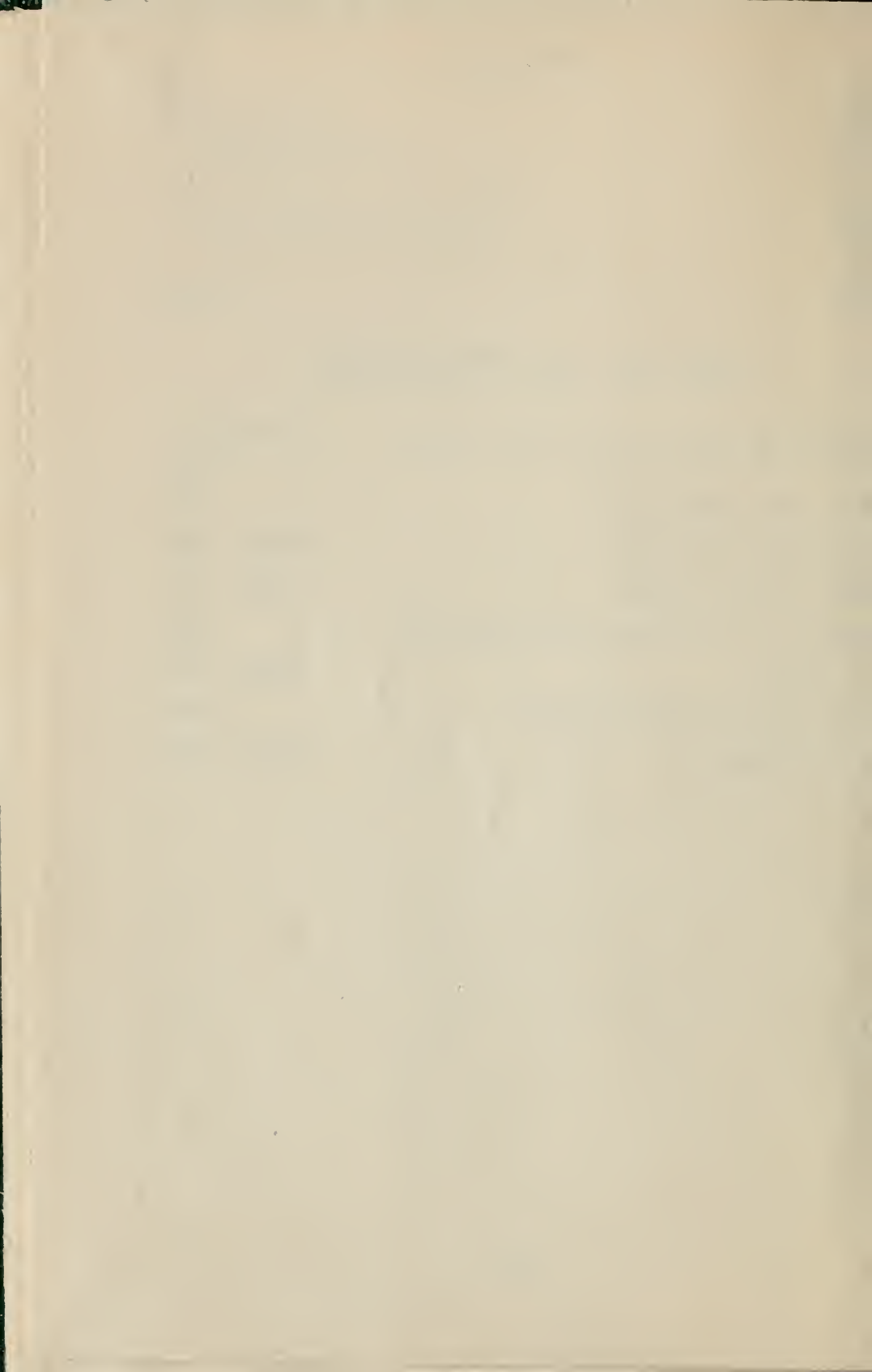
CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY	13
<i>Washington Irving</i>	33
THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO	36
<i>Edgar Allan Poe</i>	44
TENNESSEE'S PARTNER	48
<i>Bret Harte</i>	61
THE LAST LESSON	65
<i>Alphonse Daudet</i>	70
THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR	74
<i>Robert Louis Stevenson</i>	95
THE NECKLACE	102
<i>Guy de Maupassant</i>	111
A GALA DRESS	117
<i>Mary Wilkins Freeman</i>	131
UNDER THE LION'S PAW	133
<i>Hamlin Garland</i>	151
ON THE	155
<i>Art</i>	160
A BLACK BARGAINED	163
<i>"O. (William Porter)</i>	179
THE WELL	186
<i>William Wymark Jacobs</i>	202

	PAGE
THE COMFORTER	205
<i>Elizabeth Jordan</i>	220
"MOLLY MCGUIRE, FOURTEEN"	223
<i>Frederick Stuart Greene</i>	252
NOTES	255

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Beneath the Tower of the Seven Floors	.	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
			PAGE
"Two bowers and an ace"	. . . . .		51
Robert Louis Stevenson	. . . . .	<i>Facing</i>	96
Mary Wilkins Freeman	. . . . .	<i>Facing</i>	131
"You'll never rob another man, damn ye!"	. . . . .		147
"O. Henry"	. . . . .	<i>Facing</i>	179
"I've dropped it down the well"	. . . . .		193
W. W. Jacobs	. . . . .	<i>Facing</i>	202



A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

INTRODUCTION

In all ages and countries mankind has told stories, each age and country finding reflection in the type of narrative best suited to mirror the life and the ideals of the people. Oriental tales which have descended to us are frequently of a moralizing or didactic nature. The fables of Æsop, as every reader knows, are told to point a truth or to enjoin a precept. The story of the stork and the fox counsels courtesy; that of the lion and the mouse illustrates that the great may be aided by the humble. So Scriptural narratives convey an underlying truth or idealize a virtue. The story of David and Jonathan apotheosizes brotherly love; the very name of Job epitomizes patience. In short, there usually occurs in Oriental narrative—whatever else may exist—the didactic element, with emphasis on the moral or spiritual. The ideal of truth is Hebraic.

Among the Greeks, contrariwise, existed a love of narrative as narrative, as an end in itself. They demanded no ethical reason as an excuse to hear a story or to tell one; they were truly artistic in that they represented, according to Aristotle's idea of art, the workings of life itself. They, too, it is true, idealized virtues, such as the love of Antigone for her father, or the love of Prometheus for humanity; but they did so in conformity with their ideals of supreme beauty, of perfection, rather than of duty. They gave us what the far East never gave: the Iliad and the Odyssey, tales of stirring adventure and of mighty battles, the hero Ulysses and the heroes of Troy. The Oriental vision was fixed on truth, duty, law; the Oriental-

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

ists were preachers. The Greek vision looked toward beauty the Greeks were artists. We must remember, of course, that these terms are not mutually exclusive. In the words of the English poet:

“‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,’—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

But for a working basis we may agree with Poe, the father of the modern short-story, that their provinces are far from identical.

Now in the current of modern fiction are found united these ideals of art for art's sake and art for truth's sake. In proportion as the artist is also a teacher he will look on his fictive material as a medium for propaganda, for conveying a moral in so far as the teacher is an artist, he will leave the concrete facts of his fiction to carry with them their own lesson.

To reflect life and to leave in the reader's mind, after he has viewed the reflection, some principle of truth is the end of fiction. It must entertain by its art, while so doing; or else its very essence is lost. And by entertainment I mean not merely the lighter forms of amusement. One may be entertained by the simple pathos of “The Last Class,” though moved to tears; one may be entertained by “The Cask of Amontillado,” though horror-fixed. By tears as well as by laughter we establish a common ground of humanity between ourselves and the fictive characters. We go to the playhouse or we read a story to have our emotions played upon. If we knew we should neither smile nor weep, or at least be moved in the direction of tears or laughter, we should hardly buy the ticket for the drama or sit for hours absorbed in the volume.

In judging the value of any story, then, whether it be long or short, you will do so according to your own measure of emotional reaction. As a student, you will need to temper your judgment by that of others who have open minds and hearts for the reception of impressions, particularly by the judgment of adults, whose experience is greater, or should

INTRODUCTION

be greater, and who should possess, therefore, more trustworthy ability in evaluations. But if you dislike a story, be sure of your dislike, and state your reasons. If you like it, study to find the cause of your approval. And if you are writing stories yourself, try to utilize in their creation some of the principles your analysis has revealed to you as the main-springs of success. Be an artist and entertain your audience; be, to some extent, a teacher and leave with your reader an abiding principle of truth or of life.

The short-story as an art form is not yet a hundred years of age. It has many predecessors, as the paragraphs above have indicated, in ancient literatures. For centuries, moreover, some form of brief narrative has existed in English. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the age of Chaucer, Gower, Oocleve and Lydgate, Englishmen drew upon the treasures of the far East and of Greece, Italy and France. The plan of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales" is similar to that of Boccaccio's "Decameron," and many of Chaucer's stories are revampings of tales from the continent. In the sixteenth century, Englishmen were writing brief novels of sorts, such as "Rosalind," by Thomas Lodge; the stories of the various guilds, by Thomas Deloney, and "Pandosto," by Robert Greene. These, frequently, were dramatized, much as a dramatist to-day adapts to the stage material from the novels of his contemporaries. Shakespeare, for example, used Lodge's "Rosalind" in creating "As You Like It," and drew upon Greene's "Pandosto" in writing "A Winter's Tale." The great age of the drama, extending from the latter half of the sixteenth century well into the seventeenth, deferred the age of narrative writing to a later period. First, then, the English epic came into its own in the supreme work of its kind, Milton's "Paradise Lost." Later, still, the brief narrative in prose advanced through the channel of allegory, with didactic purpose, and through the character sketches of Addison and Steele. Character sketches, themselves one condition of modern narrative, had been written earlier by Sir Thomas Overbury ("Characters," 1614) and others. In the *Spectator* (first number,

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

March 1, 1711) and similar papers, then, appeared side by side such enduring allegories as "The Visions of Mirza" and such characterization as made Sir Roger de Coverly a permanent figure in our literature. Here were the story and the character. Put them together; drop the didactic element, or subdue it, and you have the modern narrative.

This modern narrative appeared in "Robinson Crusoe" (1719-1720). With the growth of journalism, and the spread of magazine literature, the tale found development. By the time of *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817) short stories evinced adherence to a certain type form. In America, Washington Irving was an early exponent of the tale writer. He recognized that this brief type of fiction must be executed more carefully than a longer narrative, that its form must be more nearly perfect. With such ideals in mind, he wrote "The Tales of a Traveller," and, among his "Sketch Book" stories, "Rip Van Winkle," and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," which have proved sufficiently powerful to create for America a folk-lore of her own. But Irving did not formulate the laws of the modern short-story. That task he left for another.

That other was Edgar Allan Poe. When he wrote "Berenice" in 1835 he had in mind certain definite ideals of structure, ideals gleaned for the most part from his study of the type of story then in existence. In a criticism,* he wrote four or five hundred words of utmost significance in the history of American literature. These are his chief ideas:

"A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means,

*Published in *Graham's Magazine*, May, 1842.

INTRODUCTION

with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided."

In addition, he believes the short-story, as here discussed, best fulfills the demands of high genius. It possesses, what the novel does not, an immense force derivable from *totality*. One may read it in a half hour to two hours; the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences resulting from weariness or interruption. He believes it has one point of superiority over the poem, and that is that its province may be Truth, as opposed to the poetic province of Beauty. The story writer may be ratiocinative, may be sarcastic or humorous. Poetry finds these varieties of expression antagonistical. Terror, passion and horror cannot be treated in the poem so well as in the story.

Believing, then, that the tale should be closely unified, that it should not loiter or digress, that it should be characterized by a singleness of effect and should make a definite impression, Poe chose effects and situations which could not fail to impress the reader. A man murdered, dismembered, and buried under a house; a man drawn into a whirlpool and thrown up alive; a man in a dungeon tortured with fiendish ingenuity,—such terrible and such horrible examples cannot but make their effect. His main characters are men dominated by an *idée fixe*: Montresor is moved by revenge; the narrators of "The Tell-tale Heart" and "The Black Cat" are madmen; the lover of Ligeia and the lover of Berenice are monomaniacs. The action is in harmony with the character to produce the desired single effect. In the tales of ratiocination, Poe showed that he understood plot presentation as well as plot formation. He constructed in "The Purloined Letter" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" the first detective stories.

Hawthorne also composed a few excellent specimens of the

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

short-story, as distinct from the tale, but they were characterized by the search for moral perfection or the discovery or revelation of blemish in humanity. "Roger Malvin's Burial" is a story of retribution; "Rappaccini's Daughter" one of defeat in the attempt to pervert natural laws. The figures in the latter story, as in "The Birthmark," are allegorical props, or generalizations, rather than real men and women. Hawthorne wrote, moreover, without expressed formulation of the laws of story writing. It is as if story evolution found in him a high representative at the end of a series, and as if Poe cut away from the old series to begin a new.

After Poe, who died in 1849, there followed such masters as Bret Harte, Frank Stockton, Henry James, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Alice Brown, Margaret Deland, Richard Harding Davis, William Dean Howells, and "O. Henry." In other parts of the English speaking world Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, and W. W. Jacobs extended the vogue of the short-story. In France, where a slightly different ideal had prevailed, that of dramatic form and effect, François Coppée, Alphonse Daudet, and Guy de Maupassant produced bodies of work containing significant masterpieces. Besides the celebrated contributors to the art, those consciously creating the "short-story" as distinct from the story that is merely short, there have been eminent men and women like Charles Egbert Craddock, George W. Cable, Thomas Nelson Page, James Lane Allen, Sarah Orne Jewett, Hamlin Garland, and Norman Duncan, who have celebrated certain sections of America in the brief tale. The pathos of the Tennessee mountaineer's life, of the vanishing Creole race, the tragedy of the Lost Cause, the rugged life of the fishermen off the coasts of Maine and Labrador, the hardships of the pioneer of the Middle West,—if these had not been perpetuated by the authors just mentioned, America would have lost much of that literary history which adds to the epic of the land. That many of the writers mentioned above are still living, some of them yet in their prime, will serve to suggest

INTRODUCTION

comparatively recent development of the short-story as a distinct form of literature.

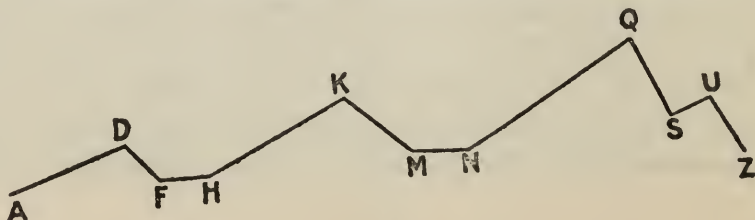
After the pioneers and then the authors who developed the story, we have to-day scores of craftsmen who are interpreting Americans to themselves. Elizabeth Jordan, Fannie Hurst, Anna Ferber, Mary Synon, Katherine Fullerton Gerould, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Irvin Cobb, Wilbur Daniel Steele, Booth Tarkington, James B. Connolly, Harold Porter, Clarence Budington Kelland, Melville D. Post, Charles Van Loan,—these among the outstanding names of present day short-story writers. It is the great age of the short-story. And when the literary historian of a future day takes account of the last two decades of the twentieth century, he may rely with confidence on the better class of stories as a mirror of the times.

The short-story may be characterized as a narrative, the average length of which is five thousand words—with a possible range of five hundred to twenty-five thousand—and the chief essential of which is some form of struggle. As the length increases, an entanglement or complication of several interests may occur, and such complication must find always a satisfactory solution; the entangled interests must be untangled and made smooth or straight. The struggle may be physical, mental or moral; it may consist of a chase, the overcoming of the obstacle, or any conflict. It may be between animals, even insects; or it may be between beings of a higher order, men and angels. Thoreau has an interesting account, in "Walden," of a battle between two ants, where the struggle, though comparatively microscopic, is present with no less intensity than between the opposing heaven and hell forces in Milton's "Battle of the Angels." The latter is telescopic and required the imagination of a great poet to present it; the former needed mainly the patient observation of a naturalist. But for short-story purposes the various struggles of mankind offer best material. A man with frozen hands attempts to build a fire on the snow plains of Alaska,—this is the physical struggle in Jack London's "To Build a Fire." A detective seeks the cause of untimely and horrible death,—this

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

mental struggle Poe used in "The Murders of the Rue Morgue." The mental struggle is found in most detective stories, such as those of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Melville Davisson Post. Or the strife may be in man's soul, as in Stevenson's "Markheim," or De Maupassant's "A Coward." More difficult still to write, because dealing with forces but vaguely apprehended, are the tales that show war between man and Fate. Thomas Hardy's "Imaginative Woman" presents an instance of this class of struggle. Again, a supernatural force may strive with the natural, as various ghost-stories testify; for example, Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw."

In the progress from beginning to end, this struggle finds exploitation in the plot or framework. The chief steps in the "playing up" of the opposing forces are usually as follows: First, an initial impulse or inciting force which sets the action going, as the push of a lever sets an engine moving along the track. Something happens without which the action would not have existed. Second, a number of steps or minor climaxes in the progress to the climax. Third, the climax of action or the end of the action, before which there may be a noteworthy turning point, the dramatic climax, where the balance is nicely adjusted between the opposing forces. The point at which a change of fortune sets in for the chief character, however, may come only with the end of the action, and in this case the two climaxes are identical. For example, in Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," the main character is just being forced into the pit when he is rescued. With the rescue, the story closes. Obviously, the change in this character's fortune comes only with the climax of action. But the normal structure of the short-story plot, like that of a play, more frequently has some steps between the dramatic climax and the end of the action. Such structure may be illustrated by the diagram:



INTRODUCTION

That is, D and K are minor climaxes, Q is the major climax (the dramatic climax) and Z is the climax of action. U represents what is sometimes called the period of final suspense. After the character's salvation or doom has seemed indicated in the dramatic climax, there frequently comes, a moment afterward, a situation or opportunity for a reverse of fortune. But the end of the action shows that the change represented by the dramatic climax remains fixed, and that the impulse of final suspense was but a pause in the rush to the end. For example, in the play, "Romeo and Juliet," there is still a hope after Romeo enters the tomb that he will see Juliet awake and all will be well. But he drinks the poison just before Juliet shows the first faint stirring of life. So in "The Well," by Mr. Jacobs, the final suspense holds from the time Benson descends into the well to the moment when the men let go the rope.

In building a plot every writer plans his order of events carefully from A to Z, keeping in mind that every significant act will be followed by a logical result; likewise that a significant event must be preceded by a logical cause. The order first developed, however, may not be, probably will not be, the order of presentation. The modern story writer has learned to secure surprise, either for a character in the story or for the reader alone, by inverting his plot order and bringing into notice at the close some point the reader had not gathered or of which he had been deprived, deliberately, at the place in the story where it would have occurred naturally. For example, in "The Necklace," the author holds back the important fact that the necklace was paste. At the end, Madame Loisel learns the fact, and through her the reader. This fact played an important part in the development of the plot from first to last, but if it had not been withheld until the close, the story would not have attained noteworthy existence, much less its rank as a classic.

Again, by omitting a fact or detail from the series of events, the author may create mystery or may leave the reader to construct for himself part of the story. And here a word

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

to the amateur or the beginner may be of value. Tediousness is the bane of the literature which seeks to amuse. Seek to hint, to suggest, rather than to describe and narrate in copious measure. Such measure is prone to be that of prolixity. Every reader likes to help build the story. He may not know that he likes to create, but this fact has nothing to do with the value of the truth that *he must help to create the story*. Stockton's "The Lady or the Tiger?" has been popular from the day of its first appearance in the *Century*, and largely because the author seems frankly to ask the reader what happened, anyway! Or take the case of "The Well," again. Mr. Jacobs does not tell us that Benson thrust Wilfred Carr into the well; he hints that something gruesome had occurred; he gradually leads us into perception of what definitely had occurred. The dawning realization of the fact adds to the horror and to the feeling of impending doom.

As opposed to this clever machination of the present-day writer, "The Moor's Legacy" offers an example of the straightforward order of events. A happens first, then B, then C, and so on down to Z, the end. The reader must be interested through the nature of the events themselves, in such a story, and in the excellent manner of the telling. Suspense operates, also, making the reader wonder what will be the final outcome.

The characters in the struggle should be few, two or three, one of whom is the most important, as in "Markheim," by Robert Louis Stevenson, or in "The Comforter," by Elizabeth Jordan. All characters should play rôles which unite to produce unified action, and this is particularly true of stories wherein three or four characters all have important parts. For example, in "The Sire de Malétroit's Door," the ruling personality from the beginning to the end of the action is the Sire, himself. Blanche, his niece, is the character played upon, the passive character; Denis is the one from whose point of view the story is told, he becoming drawn into the Sire's plans by the coincidence with which the story begins, and remaining by force of circumstances. Although Champdivers does not appear upon the stage of action, he is clearly

INTRODUCTION

the motivating force, the cause for which the Sire instituted his scheme. A single reading of the stories in this collection will be sufficient to indicate to the student the main character in each, and the contributory value of each subordinate rôle.

If plot is the first element of the story, and character is the second element, then the setting, or the place where the action of the plot is performed by the people of the story, is the third large element. By setting is understood not only the immediate locale, as the town of Bethel and vicinity constitute the setting of "A Blackjack Bargainer," but also the general region or country of which it is a part. The time of year, the time of day and so forth constitute further elements, as well as some indication of century or period. North Carolina of the present, or recent past, is suggested as the larger setting of O. Henry's story.

In a well balanced example, plot, character and setting are combined in such proportion as to present a triune interest. But if character is dominant, the plot may be just sufficient to make a narrative rather than a mere character sketch. "The Comforter" is an excellent instance of a "character story." If setting dominates, the plot may be just sufficient to make a narrative as opposed to a mere descriptive local color sketch. When the *feeling* induced by a place or setting dominates, the result is an "atmosphere story." Kipling's "The City of Dreadful Night" represents the local sketch; Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" represents the highest type of the story of atmosphere. If the story is one of plot, the characters may be more typical, less keenly differentiated as individuals; the setting may sink into relative insignificance. The chief interest, then, will lie in the complication and the solution of the plot problem. Most detective stories are examples of this type. The reader is interested mainly in the action, not so much in those about whom the action centers.



A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

BY WASHINGTON IRVING

Just within the fortress of the Alhambra,¹ in front of the royal palace, is a broad open esplanade, called the place or square of the cisterns (*la plaza de los algibes*), so called from being undermined by reservoirs of water, hidden from sight, and which² have existed from the time of the Moors.³ At one corner of this esplanade is a Moorish well, cut through the living rock to a great depth, the water of which is cold as ice and clear as crystal. The wells made by the Moors are always in repute, for it is well known what pains they took to penetrate to the purest and sweetest springs and fountains. This one we are speaking of is famous throughout Granada, insomuch that the water-carriers, some bearing great water-jars on their shoulders, others driving asses before them, laden with earthen vessels, are ascending and descending the steep woody avenues of the Alhambra from early dawn until a late hour of the night.

Fountains and wells, ever since the scriptural days,⁴ have been noted gossiping places in hot climates, and at the well in question there is a kind of perpetual club kept up during the livelong day, by the invalids, old women, and other curious, do-nothing folk of the fortress, who sit here on the stone benches under an awning spread over the well to shelter the toll-gatherer from the sun, and dawdle over the gossip of the fortress, and question any water-carrier that arrives, about the news of the city, and make long comments on every thing they hear and see. Not an hour of the day but loitering house-

wives and idle maid-servants may be seen, lingering with pitcher on head or in hand, to hear the last of the endless tattle of these worthies.⁵

Among the water-carriers who once resorted to this well there was a sturdy, strong-backed, bandy-legged little fellow, named Pedro Gil, but called Peregil for shortness. Being a water-carrier, he was a Gallego, or native of Galicia,⁶ of course. Nature seems to have formed races of men as she has of animals for different kinds of drudgery. In France the shoe-blacks are all Savoyards,⁷ the porters of hotels all Swiss, and in the day of hoops and hair powder in England, no man could give the regular swing to a sedan chair but a bog-trotting Irishman. So in Spain the carriers of water and bearers of burdens are all sturdy little natives of Galicia. No man says, "get me a porter," but, "call a Gallego."

To return from this digression. Peregil the Gallego had begun business with merely a great earthen jar, which he carried upon his shoulder; by degrees he rose in the world, and was enabled to purchase an assistant, of a correspondent class of animals, being a stout shaggy-haired donkey. On each side of this, his long-eared aid-de-camp, in a kind of pannier,⁸ were slung his water-jars covered with fig leaves to protect them from the sun. There was not a more industrious water-carrier in all Granada, nor one more merry withal. The streets rang with his cheerful voice as he trudged after his donkey, singing forth the usual summer note that resounds through the Spanish towns: "*quien quiere agua—agua mas fria que la nieve.*—Who wants water—water colder than snow—who wants water from the well of the Alhambra—cold as ice and clear as crystal?" When he served a customer with a sparkling glass, it was always with a pleasant word that caused a smile, and if, perchance, it was a comely dame, or dimpling damsel, it was always with a sly leer and a compliment to her beauty that was irresistible. Thus Peregil the Gallego was noted throughout all Granada for being one of the civillest, pleasantest, and happiest of mortals. Yet it is not he who sings loudest and jokes most that has the lightest

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

heart. Under all this air of merriment, honest Peregil had his cares and troubles. He had a large family of ragged children to support, who were hungry and clamorous as a nest of young swallows, and beset him with their outcries for food whenever he came home of an evening. He had a help-mate too, who was anything but a help to him. She had been a village beauty before marriage, noted for her skill in dancing the bolero and rattling the castanets, and she still retained her early propensities, spending the hard earnings of honest Peregil in frippery, and laying the very donkey under requisition for junketing parties into the country on Sundays, and saints' days, and those innumerable holydays which are rather more numerous in Spain than the days of the week. With all this she was a little of a slattern, something more of a lie-a-bed, and, above all, a gossip of the first water; neglecting house, household and everything else, to loiter slip-shod in the houses of her gossip neighbors.

He, however, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, accommodates the yoke of matrimony to the submissive neck. Peregil bore all the heavy dispensations of wife and children with as meek a spirit as his donkey bore the water jars; and, however he might shake his ears in private, never ventured to question the household virtue of his slattern spouse.

He loved his children, too, even as an owl loves its owlets, seeing in them his own image multiplied and perpetuated, for they were a sturdy, long-backed, bandy-legged little brood. The great pleasure of honest Peregil was, whenever he could afford himself a scanty holyday and had a handful of maravedies⁹ to spare, to take the whole litter forth with him, some in his arms, some tugging at his skirts, and some trudging at his heels, and to treat them to a gambol among the orchards of the Vega,¹⁰ while his wife was dancing with her holyday friends in the Angosturas of the Darro.

It was a late hour one summer night, and most of the water-carriers had desisted from their toils. The day had been uncommonly sultry; the night was one of those delicious moon-lights, which tempt the inhabitants of those southern climes

to indemnify themselves for the heat and inaction of the day, by lingering in the open air and enjoying its tempered sweetness until after midnight. Customers for water were therefore still abroad. Peregil, like a considerate, painstaking little father, thought of his hungry children. "One more journey to the well," said he to himself, "to earn a good Sunday's puchero¹¹ for the little ones." So saying, he trudged rapidly up the steep avenue of the Alhambra, singing as he went, and now and then bestowing a hearty thwack with a cudgel on the flanks of his donkey, either by way of cadence to the song, or refreshment to the animal; for dry blows serve in lieu for provender in Spain, for all beasts of burden.

When arrived at the well,¹² he found it deserted by everyone except a solitary stranger in Moorish garb, seated on the stone bench in the moonlight. Peregil paused at first, and regarded him with surprise, not unmixed with awe, but the Moor feebly beckoned him to approach.

"I am faint and ill," said he; "aid me to return to the city, and I will pay thee double what thou couldst gain by thy jars of water."

The honest heart of the little water-carrier was touched with compassion at the appeal of the stranger. "God forbid," said he, "that I should ask fee or reward for doing a common act of humanity."

He accordingly helped the Moor on his donkey, and set off slowly for Granada, the poor Moslem being so weak that it was necessary to hold him on the animal to keep him from falling to the earth.

When they entered the city, the water-carrier demanded whither he should conduct him. "Alas!" said the Moor, faintly, "I have neither home nor habitation. I am a stranger in the land. Suffer me to lay my head this night beneath thy roof, and thou shalt be amply repaid."

Honest Peregil thus saw himself unexpectedly saddled with an infidel guest, but he was too humane to refuse a night's shelter to a fellow being in so forlorn a plight; so he conducted the Moor to his dwelling. The children, who had

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

sallied forth, open mouthed as usual, on hearing the tramp of the donkey, ran back with affright, when they beheld the turbaned stranger, and hid themselves behind their mother. The latter stepped forth intrepidly, like a ruffling hen before her brood, when a vagrant dog approaches.

"What infidel companion," cried she, "is this you have brought home at this late hour, to draw upon us the eyes of the Inquisition?"¹³

"Be quiet, wife," replied the Gallego, "here is a poor sick stranger, without friend or home; wouldst thou turn him forth to perish in the streets?"

The wife would still have remonstrated, for, though she lived in a hovel, she was a furious stickler for the credit of her house; the little water-carrier, however, for once was stiff-necked, and refused to bend beneath the yoke. He assisted the Moslem to alight, and spread a mat and sheepskin for him, on the ground, in the coolest part of the house; being¹⁴ the only kind of bed that his poverty afforded.

In a little while the Moor was seized with violent convulsions, which defied all the ministering skill of the simple water-carrier. The eye of the poor patient acknowledged his kindness. During an interval of his fits he called him to his side, and addressing him in a low voice: "My end," said he, "I fear is at hand. If I die I bequeath you this box as a reward for your charity." So saying, he opened his albornoz or cloak, and showed a small box of sandal wood, strapped round his body.

"God grant, my friend," replied the worthy little Gallego, "that you may live many years to enjoy your treasure, whatever it may be."

The Moor shook his head; he laid his hand upon the box, and would have said something more concerning it, but his convulsions returned with increased violence, and in a little while he expired.

The water-carrier's wife was now as one distracted. "This comes," said she, "of your foolish good nature, always running into scrapes to oblige others. What will become of us

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

when this corpse is found in our house? We shall be sent to prison as murderers; and if we escape with our lives, shall be ruined by notaries and alguazils.”¹⁵

Poor Peregil was in equal tribulation, and almost repented himself of having done a good deed. At length a thought struck him. “It is not yet day,” said he. “I can convey the dead body out of the city and bury it in the sands on the banks of the Xenil. No one saw the Moor enter our dwelling, and no one will know anything of his death.” So said, so done. The wife aided him: they rolled the body of the unfortunate Moslem in the mat on which he had expired, laid it across the ass, and Mattias set out with it for the banks of the river.

As ill luck would have it,¹⁶ there lived opposite to the water-carrier a barber, named Pedrillo Pedrugo, one of the most prying, tattling, mischief-making of his gossip tribe. He was a weasel-faced, spider-legged varlet, supple and insinuating; the famous Barber of Seville¹⁷ could not surpass him for his universal knowledge of the affairs of others, and he had no more power of retention than a sieve. It was said that he slept with but one eye at a time, and kept one ear uncovered, so that, even in his sleep, he might see and hear all that was going on. Certain it is, he was a sort of scandalous chronicle for the quidnuncs¹⁸ of Granada, and had more customers than all the rest of his fraternity.

This meddlesome barber heard Peregil arrive at an unusual hour of night, and the exclamation of his wife and children. His head was instantly popped out of a little window which served him as a look out, and he saw his neighbour assist a man in a Moorish garb into his dwelling. This was so strange an occurrence, that Pedrillo Pedrugo slept not a wink that night—every five minutes he was at his loop-hole, watching the lights that gleamed through the chinks of his neighbour’s door, and before daylight he beheld Peregil sally forth with his donkey unusually laden.

The inquisitive barber was in a fidget; he slipped on his clothes, and, stealing forth silently, followed the water-carrier

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

at a distance, until he saw him dig a hole in the sandy bank of the Xenil, and bury something that had the appearance of a dead body.

The barber hied him home and fidgeted about his shop, setting everything upside down, until sunrise. He then took a basin under his arm, and sallied forth to the house of his daily customer the Alcalde.¹⁹

The Alcalde was just risen. Pedrillo Pedrugo seated him in a chair, threw a napkin round his neck, put a basin of hot water under his chin, and began to mollify his beard with his fingers.

"Strange doings," said Pedrugo, who played barber and newsmonger at the same time. "Strange doings! Robbery, and murder, and burial, all in one night!"

"Hey? how! What is it you say?" cried the Alcalde.

"I say," replied the barber, rubbing a piece of soap over the nose and mouth of the dignitary, for a Spanish barber disdains to employ a brush: "I say that Peregil the Gallego has robbed and murdered a Moorish Musselman, and buried him this blessed night,—*maldita sea la noche*,—accursed be the night for the same!"

"But how do you know all this?" demanded the Alcalde.

"Be patient, Señor, and you shall hear all about it," replied Pedrillo, taking him by the nose and sliding a razor over his cheek. He then recounted all that he had seen, going through both operations at the same time, shaving his beard, washing his chin, and wiping him dry with a dirty napkin, while he was robbing, murdering, and burying the Moslem.

Now so it happened that this Alcalde was one of the most overbearing, and at the same time most griping and corrupt curmudgeons in all Granada. It could not be denied, however, that he set a high value upon justice, for he sold it at its weight in gold. He presumed the case in point to be one of murder and robbery; doubtless there must be rich spoil; how was it to be secured into the legitimate hands of the law? for as to merely entrapping the delinquent—that would be feeding the gallows; but entrapping the booty—that would be enrich-

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

ing the judge; and such, according to his creed, was the great end of justice. So thinking, he summoned to his presence his trustiest alguazil; a gaunt hungry-looking varlet, clad, according to the custom of his order, in the ancient Spanish garb—a broad black beaver, turned up at the sides; a quaint ruff, a small black cloak dangling from his shoulders; rusty black underclothes that set off his spare wiry form; while in his hand he bore a slender white wand, the dreaded insignia of his office. Such was the legal bloodhound of the ancient Spanish breed, that he put upon the traces of the unlucky water-carrier; and such was his speed and certainty that he was upon the haunches of poor Peregil before he had returned to his dwelling, and brought both him and his donkey before the dispenser of justice.²⁰

The Alcalde bent upon him one of his most terrific frowns. "Hark ye, culprit," roared he in a voice that made the knees of the little Gallego smite together,—“Hark ye, culprit! there is no need denying thy guilt; everything is known to me. A gallows is the proper reward for the crime thou hast committed, but I am merciful, and readily listen to reason. The man that has been murdered in thy house was a Moor, an infidel, the enemy of our faith. It was doubtless in a fit of religious zeal that thou hast slain him. I will be indulgent therefore; render up the property of which thou hast robbed him, and we will hush the matter up.”

The poor water-carrier called upon all the saints to witness his innocence; alas! not one of them appeared, and if there had, the Alcalde would have disbelieved the whole kalendar. The water-carrier related the whole story of the dying Moor with the straightforward simplicity of truth, but it was all in vain. “Wilt thou persist in saying,” demanded the judge “that this Moslem had neither gold nor jewels, which were the object of thy cupidity?”

“As I hope to be saved, your worship,” replied the water-carrier, “he had nothing but a small box of sandal wood, which he bequeathed to me in reward of my services.”

“A box of sandal wood! a box of sandal wood!” exclaimed

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

the Alcalde, his eyes sparkling at the idea of precious jewels, "and where is this box? where have you concealed it?"

"An' it please your grace," replied the water-carrier, "it is in one of the panniers of my mule, and heartily at the service of your worship."

He had hardly spoken the words when the keen alguazil darted off and reappeared in an instant with the mysterious box of sandal wood. The Alcalde opened it with an eager and trembling hand, all pressed forward to gaze upon the treasures it was expected to contain; when, to their disappointment, nothing appeared within but a parchment scroll, covered with Arabic characters, and an end of a waxen taper!

When there is nothing to be gained by the conviction of a prisoner, justice, even in Spain, is apt to be impartial. The Alcalde, having recovered from his disappointment and found there was really no booty in the case, now listened dispassionately to the explanation of the water-carrier, which was corroborated by the testimony of his wife. Being convinced, therefore, of his innocence, he discharged him from arrest; nay more, he permitted him to carry off the Moor's legacy, the box of sandal wood and its contents, as the well merited reward of his humanity; but he retained his donkey in payment of costs and charges.

Behold the unfortunate little Gallego reduced once more to the necessity of being his own water-carrier,²¹ and trudging up to the well of the Alhambra with a great earthen jar upon his shoulder. As he toiled up the hill in the heat of a summer noon his usual good-humor forsook him. "Dog of an Alcalde!" would he cry, "to rob a poor man of the means of his subsistence—of the best friend he had in the world!" And then at the remembrance of the beloved companion of his labors all the kindness of his nature would break forth. "Ah, donkey of my heart!" would he exclaim, resting his burden on a stone, and wiping the sweat from his brow, "Ah, donkey of my heart, I warrant me thou thinkest of thy old master! I warrant me thou missest the water jars:—poor beast!"

To add to his afflictions his wife received him, on his re-

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

turn home, with whimperings and repinings; she had clearly the vantage-ground of him, having warned him not to commit the egregious act of hospitality that had brought on him all these misfortunes, and like a knowing woman, she took every occasion to throw her superior sagacity in his teeth. If ever her children lacked food, or needed a new garment, she would answer with a sneer, "Go to your father; he's heir to king Chico of the Alhambra. Ask him to help you out of the Moor's strong box."

Was ever a poor mortal more soundly punished, for having done a good action! The unlucky Peregil was grieved in flesh and spirit, but still he bore meekly with the railings of his spouse. At length one evening,²² when, after a hot day's toil, she taunted him in the usual manner, he lost all patience. He did not venture to retort upon her, but his eye rested upon the box of sandal wood, which lay on a shelf with lid half open, as if laughing in mockery of his vexation. Seizing it up he dashed it with indignation on the floor. "Unlucky was the day that I ever set eyes on thee," he cried, "or sheltered thy master beneath my roof."

As the box struck the floor the lid flew wide open, and the parchment scroll rolled forth. Peregil sat regarding the scroll for some time in moody silence. At length rallying his ideas, "Who knows," thought he, "but this writing may be of some importance, as the Moor seems to have guarded it with such care." Picking it up, therefore, he put it in his bosom, and the next morning, as he was crying water through the streets, he stopped at the shop of a Moor, a native of Tangiers, who sold trinkets and perfumery in the Zacatin, and asked him to explain the contents.

The Moor read the scroll attentively, then stroked his beard and smiled. "This manuscript," said he, "is a form of incantation for the recovery of hidden treasure, that is under the power of enchantment. It is said to have such virtue that the strongest bolts and bars, nay the adamant rock itself will yield before it."

"Bah!" cried the little Gallego, "what is all that to me?"

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

"I am no enchanter, and know nothing of buried treasure." So saying he shouldered his water jar, left the scroll in the hands of the Moor, and trudged forward on his daily rounds.

That evening, however, as he rested himself about twilight at the well of the Alhambra, he found a number of gossips assembled at the place, and their conversation, as is not unusual at that shadowy hour, turned upon old tales and traditions of a supernatural nature.²³ Being all poor as rats, they dwelt with peculiar fondness upon the popular theme of enchanted riches left by the Moors in various parts of the Alhambra. Above all, they concurred in the belief that there were great treasures buried deep in the earth under the tower of the Seven Floors.

These stories made an unusual impression on the mind of honest Peregil, and they sank deeper and deeper into his thoughts as he returned alone down the darkling avenues. "If, after all, there should be treasure hid beneath that tower—and if the scroll I left with the Moor should enable me to get at it!" In the sudden ecstasy of the thought he had well nigh let fall his water jar.

That night he tumbled and tossed, and could scarcely get a wink of sleep for the thoughts that were bewildering his brain. In the morning,²⁴ bright and early, he repaired to the shop of the Moor, and told him all that was passing in his mind. "You can read Arabic," said he, "suppose we go together to the tower and try the effect of the charm; if it fails we are no worse off than before, but if it succeeds we will share equally all the treasure we may discover."

"Hold," replied the Moslem, "this writing is not sufficient of itself; it must be read at midnight, by the light of a taper singularly compounded and prepared, the ingredients of which are not within my reach. Without such taper the scroll is of no avail."

"Say no more!" cried the little Gallego. "I have such a taper at hand and will bring it here in a moment." So saying he hastened home, and soon returned with the end of a

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

yellow wax taper that he had found in the box of sandal wood.

The Moor felt it, and smelt of it. "Here are rare and costly perfumes," said he, "combined with this yellow wax. This is the kind of taper specified in the scroll. While this burns, the strongest walls and most secret caverns will remain open; woe to him, however, who lingers within until it be extinguished.²⁵ He will remain enchanted with the treasure."

It was now agreed between them to try the charm that very night. At a late hour, therefore, when nothing was stirring but bats and owls, they ascended the woody hill of the Alhambra, and approached that awful tower, shrouded by trees and rendered formidable by so many traditionary tales.

By the light of a lantern, they groped their way through bushes, and over fallen stones, to the door of a vault beneath the tower. With fear and trembling they descended a flight of steps cut into the rock. It led to an empty chamber, damp and drear, from which another flight of steps led to a deeper vault. In this way they descended four several flights, leading into as many vaults, one below the other, but the floor of the fourth was solid, and though, according to tradition, there remained three vaults still below, it was said to be impossible to penetrate further, the residue being shut up by strong enchantment. The air of this vault was damp and chilly, and had an earthy smell, and the light scarce cast forth any rays. They paused here for a time in breathless suspense, until they faintly heard the clock of the watch tower strike midnight;²⁶ upon this they lit the waxen taper, which diffused an odour of myrrh, and frankincense, and storax.²⁷

The Moor began to read in a hurried voice.²⁸ He had scarce finished, when there was a noise as of subterraneous thunder. The earth shook, and the floor yawning open disclosed a flight of steps. Trembling with awe they descended, and by the light of the lantern found themselves in another vault, covered with Arabic inscriptions. In the centre stood a great chest, secured with seven bands of steel, at each end of which sat an enchanted Moor in armour, but motionless as a statue,

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

being controlled by the power of the incantation. Before the chest were several jars filled with gold and silver and precious stones. In the largest of these they thrust their arms up to the elbow, and at every dip hauled forth handsfull of broad yellow pieces of Moorish gold, or bracelets and ornaments of the same precious metal, while occasionally a necklace of oriental pearl would stick to their fingers. Still they trembled and breathed short while cramming their pockets with the spoils; and cast many a fearful glance at the two enchanted Moors, who sat grim and motionless, glaring upon them with unwinking eyes. At length, struck with a sudden panic at some fancied noise, they both rushed up the staircase, tumbled over one another into the upper apartment, overturned and extinguished the waxen taper, and the pavement again closed with a thundering sound.

Filled with dismay, they did not pause until they had groped their way out of the tower, and beheld the stars shining through the trees. Then seating themselves upon the grass they divided the spoil, determining to content themselves for the present with this mere skimming of the jars, but to return on some future night and drain them to the bottom. To make sure of each other's good faith, also, they divided the talismans between them, one retaining the scroll and the other the taper; this done, they set off with light hearts and well lined pockets for Granada.

As they wended their way down the hill, the shrewd Moor whispered a word of council in the ear of the simple little water-carrier.²⁹

"Friend Peregil," said he, "all this affair must be kept a profound secret until we have secured the treasure and conveyed it out of harm's way. If a whisper of it gets to the ear of the Alcalde we are undone!"

"Certainly!" replied the Gallego; "nothing can be more true."

"Friend Peregil," said the Moor, "you are a discreet man, and I make no doubt can keep a secret; but—you have a wife——"

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"She shall not know a word of it!" replied the little water-carrier sturdily.

"Enough," said the Moor, "I depend upon thy discretion and thy promise."

Never was promise more positive and sincere; but alas! what man can keep a secret from his wife? Certainly not such a one as Peregil the water-carrier, who was one of the most loving and tractable of husbands. On his return home he found his wife moping in a corner.

"Mighty well!" cried she, as he entered; "you've come at last; after rambling about until this hour of the night. I wonder you have not brought home another Moor as a house-mate." Then bursting into tears she began to wring her hands and smite her breast. "Unhappy woman that I am!" exclaimed she, "what will become of me! My house stripped and plundered by lawyers and alguazils; my husband a do-no-good that no longer brings home bread for his family, but goes rambling about, day and night, with infidel Moors. Oh, my children! my children! what will become of us; we shall all have to beg in the streets!"³⁰

Honest Peregil was so moved by the distress of his spouse, that he could not help whimpering also. His heart was as full as his pocket, and not to be restrained. Thrusting his hand into the latter he hauled forth three or four broad gold pieces and slipped them into her bosom.³¹ The poor woman stared with astonishment, and could not understand the meaning of this golden shower. Before she could recover her surprise, the little Gallego drew forth a chain of gold and dangled it before her, capering with exultation, his mouth distended from ear to ear.

"Holy Virgin protect us!" exclaimed the wife. "What hast thou been doing, Peregil? Surely thou hast not been committing murder and robbery!"

The idea scarce entered the brain of the poor woman than it became a certainty with her. She saw a prison and a gallows in the distance, and a little bandy-legged Gallego dangling

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

pendant from it; and, overcome by the horrors conjured up by her imagination, fell into violent hysterics.

What could the poor man do? He had no other means of pacifying his wife and dispelling the phantoms of her fancy, than by relating the whole story of his good fortune. This, however, he did not do until he had exacted from her the most solemn promise to keep it a profound secret from every living being.

To describe her joy would be impossible. She flung her arms round the neck of her husband, and almost strangled him with her caresses. "Now, wife!" exclaimed the little man with honest exultation, "what say you now to the Moor's legacy? Henceforth never abuse me for helping a fellow creature in distress."

The honest Gallego retired to his sheepskin mat, and slept as soundly as if on a bed of down. Not so his wife. She emptied the whole contents of his pockets upon the mat, and sat all night counting gold pieces of Arabic coin, trying on necklaces and ear-rings, and fancying the figure she should one day make when permitted to enjoy her riches.

On the following morning the honest Gallego took a broad golden coin, and repaired with it to a jeweller's shop in the Zacatin to offer it for sale; pretending to have found it among the ruins of the Alhambra. The jeweller saw that it had an Arabic inscription and was of the purest gold; he offered, however, but a third of its value, with which the water-carrier was perfectly content. Peregil now bought new clothes for his little flock, and all kinds of toys, together with ample provisions for a hearty meal, and returning to his dwelling set all his children dancing around him, while he capered in the midst, the happiest of fathers.

The wife of the water-carrier kept her promise of secrecy with surprising strictness. For a whole day and a half she went about with a look of mystery and a heart swelling almost to bursting, yet she held her peace, though surrounded by her gossips. It is true she could not help giving herself a few airs, apologized for her ragged dress, and talked of

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

ordering a new basquina all trimmed with gold lace and bugles, and a new lace mantilla. She threw out hints of her husband's intention of leaving off his trade of water-carrying, as it did not altogether agree with his health. In fact she thought they should all retire to the country for the summer, that the children might have the benefit of the mountain air, for there was no living in the city in this sultry season.

The neighbours stared at each other, and thought the poor woman had lost her wits, and her airs and graces and elegant pretensions were the theme of universal scoffing and merriment among her friends, the moment her back was turned.

If she restrained herself abroad, however, she indemnified herself at home, and, putting a string of rich oriental pearls round her neck, Moorish bracelets on her arms, an aigrette of diamonds on her head, sailed backwards and forwards in her slattern rags about the room, now and then stopping to admire herself in a piece of broken mirror. Nay, in the impulse of her simple vanity, she could not resist on one occasion showing herself at the window, to enjoy the effect of her finery on the passers by.

As the fates would have it, Pedrillo Pedrugo, the meddlesome barber, was at this moment sitting idly in his shop on the opposite side of the street, when his ever watchful eye³² caught the sparkle of a diamond. In an instant he was at his loop-hole reconnoitering the slattern spouse of the water-carrier, decorated with the splendour of an eastern bride. No sooner had he taken an accurate inventory of her ornaments than he posted off with all speed to the Alcalde. In a little while the hungry alguazil was again on the scent, and before the day was over, the unfortunate Peregil was again dragged into the presence of the judge.

"How is this, villain!" cried the Alcalde in a furious voice. "You told me that the infidel who died in your house left nothing behind but an empty coffer, and now I hear of your wife flaunting in her rags decked out with pearls and diamonds. Wretch that thou art! prepare to render up the

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

spoils of thy miserable victim, and to swing on the gallows that is already tired of waiting for thee."

The terrified water-carrier fell on his knees, and made a full relation of the marvellous manner in which he had gained his wealth. The Alcalde, the alguazil, and the inquisitive barber listened with greedy ears to this Arabian tale of enchanted treasure. The alguazil was dispatched to bring the Moor who had assisted in the incantation. The Moslem entered half frightened out of his wits at finding himself in the hands of the harpies of the law. When he beheld the water-carrier standing with sheepish look and downcast countenance, he comprehended the whole matter. "Miserable animal," said he, as he passed near him, "did I not warn thee against babbling to thy wife?"

The story of the Moor coincided exactly with that of his colleague; but the Alcalde affected to be slow of belief, and threw out menaces of imprisonment and rigorous investigation.

"Softly, good Señor Alcalde," said the Mussulman, who by this time had recovered his usual shrewdness and self-possession. "Let us not mar fortune's favours in the scramble for them. Nobody knows anything of this matter but ourselves; let us keep the secret. There is wealth enough in the cave to enrich us all. Promise a fair division, and all shall be produced; refuse, and the cave shall remain for ever closed."

The Alcalde consulted apart with the alguazil. The latter was an old fox in his profession. "Promise anything," said he, "until you get possession of the treasure. You may then seize upon the whole, and if he and his accomplice dare to murmur, threaten them with the faggot and the stake as infidels and sorcerers."³³

The Alcalde relished the advice. Smoothing his brow and turning to the Moor,—“This is a strange story,” said he, “and may be true, but I must have ocular proof of it. This very night you must repeat the incantation in my presence. If there be really such treasure, we will share it amicably between us, and say nothing further of the matter; if ye have deceived

me, expect no mercy at my hands. In the mean time you remain in custody."

The Moor and the water-carrier cheerfully agreed to the conditions, satisfied that the event would prove the truth of their words.

Towards midnight the Alcalde sallied forth secretly, attended by the alguazil and the meddlesome barber, all strongly armed. They conducted the Moor and the water-carrier as prisoners, and were provided with the stout donkey of the latter, to help off the expected treasure. They arrived at the tower without being observed, and tying the donkey to a fig-tree descended into the fourth vault of the tower.

The scroll was produced, the yellow waxen taper lighted, and the Moor read the form of incantation. The earth trembled as before, and the pavement opened with a thunderous sound, disclosing the narrow flight of steps. The Alcalde, the alguazil, and the barber were struck aghast, and could not summon courage to descend. The Moor and the water-carrier entered the lower vault and found the two Moors seated before,³⁴ silent and motionless. They removed two of the great jars, filled with golden coin and precious stones. The water-carrier bore them up one by one upon his shoulders, but though a strong-backed little man, and accustomed to carry burdens, he staggered beneath their weight, and found, when slung on each side of his donkey, they were as much as any animal could bear.

"Let us be content for the present," said the Moor; "there is as much treasure as we can carry off without being perceived, and enough to make us all wealthy to our heart's desire."

"Is there more treasure remaining behind?" demanded the Alcalde.

"The greatest prize of all," said the Moor; "a huge coffer bound with bands of steel, and filled with pearls and precious stones."

"Let us have up the coffer by all means," cried the grasping Alcalde.

LEGEND OF THE MOOR'S LEGACY

"I will descend for no more," said the Moor, doggedly. "Enough is enough for a reasonable man; more is superfluous."

"And I," said the water-carrier, "will bring up no further burthen to break the back of my poor donkey."

Finding commands, threats, and entreaties equally vain, the Alcalde turned to his two adherents. "Aid me," said he, "to bring up the coffer, and its contents shall be divided between us." So saying he descended the steps, followed, with trembling reluctance, by the alguazil and the barber.

No sooner did the Moor behold them fairly earthed than he extinguished the yellow taper: the pavement closed with its usual crash, and the three worthies remained buried in its womb.³⁵

He then hastened up the different flights of steps, nor stopped until in the open air. The little water-carrier followed him as fast as his short legs would permit.

"What hast thou done?" cried Peregil, as soon as he could recover breath. "The Alcalde and the other two are shut up in the vault!"

"It is the will of Allah!" said the Moor devoutly.

"And will you not release them?" demanded the Gallego.

"Allah forbid!" replied the Moor, smoothing his beard. "It is written in the book of fate that they shall remain enchanted until some future adventurer shall come to break the charm. The will of God be done!" So saying he hurled the end of the waxen taper far among the gloomy thickets of the glen.

There was now no remedy; so the Moor and the water-carrier proceeded with the richly laden donkey towards the city: nor could honest Peregil refrain from hugging and kissing his long-eared fellow labourer, thus restored to him from the clutches of the law; and, in fact, it is doubtful which gave the simple-hearted little man most joy at the moment, the gaining of the treasure or the recovery of the donkey.

The two partners in good luck divided their spoil amicably and fairly, excepting that the Moor, who had a little taste for

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

trinketry, made out to get into his heap the most of the pearls and precious stones, and other baubles, but then he always gave the water-carrier in lieu magnificent jewels of massy gold four times the size, with which the latter was heartily content. They took care not to linger within reach of accidents, but made off to enjoy their wealth undisturbed in other countries. The Moor returned into Africa, to his native city of Tetuan, and the Gallego, with his wife, his children and his donkey, made the best of his way to Portugal.³⁶ Here, under the admonition and tuition of his wife, he became a personage of some consequence, for she made the little man array his long body and short legs in doublet and hose, with a feather in his hat and a sword by his side; and, laying aside the familiar appellation of Peregil, assume the more sonorous title of Don Pedro Gil. His progeny grew up a thriving and merry-hearted, though short and bandy-legged generation; while the Senora Gil, be-fringed, be-laced, and be-tasseled from her head to her heels, with glittering rings on every finger, became a model of slattern fashion and finery.

As to the Alcalde, and his adjuncts, they remained shut up under the great tower of the Seven Floors, and there they remain spellbound at the present day. Whenever there shall be a lack in Spain of pimping barbers, sharking alguazils, and corrupt Alcaldes, they may be sought after; but if they have to wait until such time for their deliverance, there is danger of their enchantment enduring until doomsday.

WASHINGTON IRVING

Washington Irving, the first American story-teller to win world renown, was born in New York, April 3, 1783. He was named and baptized after General Washington took possession of the city a few months later. As a boy who was frail and allowed to follow his own inclination he found pleasure in observing the sights of the harbor and of the Hudson. He did not go to Columbia College, as his brothers had done, but read law fitfully. When his brother Peter set up a daily paper, he contributed under the pen-name of Jonathan Oldstyle a series of sketches which brought him immediate recognition, and which may be said to have launched him on a literary career.

At the age of twenty-one he went to Europe, remaining there nearly two years. Shortly after his return to America, he produced with his brother William and his friend James K. Paulding the *Salmagundi* papers, a series of humorous satires. Then followed his first significant volume, the unique "Knickerbocker History of New York" (1809). Before it was completed his betrothed died, a blow from which the author never fully recovered. Then came the War of 1812, with hard times and the failure of Irving Brothers. Washington Irving helped, eventually, to restore the family fortunes, and in his own way.

In 1815, he went to Europe again, where he remained for seventeen years. There in 1819 he published "The Sketch Book," a collection of sketches and tales. This gave him a permanent place in literature. The "Knickerbocker History" had created a Father Knickerbocker and had satirized the Dutch rule of New Amsterdam; the new work created a legend for the Hudson and the Catskills in the story of "Rip Van Winkle," and made famous the region of Sleepy Hollow. In the English sketches and tales, forming part of the volume,

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Irving faithfully reflected the spirit of England and the characteristics of the country and the people. Through this book, therefore, he introduced America and England to each other.

In 1822 he produced a second volume which he called "Bracebridge Hall." Though predominatingly English in subject-matter, it is similar to the "Sketch Book" in literary type. It was followed in 1824 by the collection of narratives, "The Tales of a Traveller."

Leaving England in 1826 Irving went to Spain, where he wrote the "Life of Columbus" (published 1828). In spite of later discoveries and investigations, this biography is regarded yet as one of authority. At Granada Irving fell under the spell of the Alhambra, about which he wrote a classic of fact and of fancy. In the pages of "The Alhambra" he tells of his journey to the city of Granada, writes picturesque descriptions of various Spanish types, and historical accounts of the rise, decline, and fall of the Moors. Many old legends are preserved in its pages, "The Moor's Legacy" being a good example. Although the legendary material was current, and was therefore not original with Irving, it would hardly have had literary value for English readers but for his development and embellishment.

After the author's return to New York in 1832 he settled at Sunnyside, near Tarrytown. There he wrote "Astoria" and other works, and enjoyed life literary and social. From 1842 to 1846 he was at Madrid, as our Minister to Spain. Later, he wrote biographies of Oliver Goldsmith and George Washington. The latter is a comprehensive study, which he had barely completed at the time of his death. He died on November 28, 1859, and was buried in Sleepy Hollow.

Other stories of hidden treasure:

1. "The Gold Bug," by Edgar Allan Poe.
2. "Tom Sawyer," by Mark Twain (See Chapters XXV-XXXIV).

WASHINGTON IRVING

3. "Treasure Island," by Robert Louis Stevenson.
4. "The Gold," by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (In the "Fair Lavinia and Others").
5. "My Buried Treasure," by Richard Harding Davis (In "The Man Who Could Not Lose").
6. "Buried Treasure," by Mazo de la Roche (*The Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1915).

Other tales by Irving, which show his power as a story teller:

1. "Rip Van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and "The Spectre Bridegroom" (In "The Sketch Book").
2. "The Student of Salamanca," and "Dolph Heyliger's Ghost" (In "Bracebridge Hall").
3. "The Tales of a Traveller" (the collection).
4. "The Legend of the Arabian Astrologer" (In "The Alhambra").

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

(ROME)¹

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length*² I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.³

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good-will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.⁴

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity—to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmery, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme mad-

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

ness of the carnival season,⁵ that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells.⁶ I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him: "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day!"⁷ But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi.⁸ If anyone has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me——"

"Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."⁹

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no;¹⁰ I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi——"

"I have no engagement;—come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk,¹¹ and drawing a *roquelaure* closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honor of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two *flambeaus*,¹² and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs¹³ of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," said he.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work¹⁴ which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was.¹⁵ You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi——"

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

"Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True—true,"¹⁶ I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Médoc will defend us from the damp."

Here I knocked the neck off a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mold.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."¹⁷

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."¹⁸

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."¹⁹

"A huge human foot d^{or},²⁰ in a field azure;²⁰ the foot crushes a serpent rampant,²⁰ whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"*Nemo me impune lacessit.*"²¹ No

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Médoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late."²² Your cough——"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Médoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave.²³ He emptied

it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said, "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said.

"It is this," I answered, producing a trowel²⁴ from beneath the folds of my roquelaure.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily.²⁵ We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and, descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaus rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the cata-

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

combs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.²⁶

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavored to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.²⁷

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi——"

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock.²⁸ Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key, I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you can not help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off.²⁹ The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth;

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaus over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamorer grew still.³⁰

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said:

“Ha! ha! ha!—he! he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!”³¹ I said.

“He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo,—the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“*For the love of God, Montresor!*”³²

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"³³

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud:

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again:

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs.³⁴ I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones.³⁵ For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat.*³⁶

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edgar Allan Poe, now recognized as perhaps the greatest literary genius America has produced, was born in Boston, January 19, 1809. His parents were of the theatrical profession, his mother being a famous actress of the day. Mrs. Poe died when the boy was not quite three years of age and he entered the home of Mr. Allan, a wealthy tobacco merchant, in Richmond, Virginia. Accounts of Poe's childhood say that his precocity equaled his beauty; that at six he could read and draw, and that he made a pretty picture as he recited or danced, his black curls tossing, his gray eyes flashing.

In 1815, Mr. Allan moved to England. There Poe entered a school near London, where he applied himself diligently to the study of the classics and to literature. When the family returned, after five years, to Richmond, Poe continued his studies, showing marked indications of poetic genius. He excelled in athletics no less than in the languages classical and modern, a popular story being to the effect that he once swam the five or six miles from Richmond to Warwick.

In February, 1826, at the age of seventeen, Poe matriculated at the University of Virginia. There he seems to have entered upon a round of recklessness, a recklessness which to a great extent characterized much of his after life. Before the year had ended he found himself twenty-five hundred dollars in debt from gambling. These debts his adopted father refused to pay, and removed the boy from the University, designing for him a place in the counting-room. But in May, 1827, Poe ran away and joined the United States Army, giving his age as twenty-two and his name as Edgar Perry. Not long after, he published his first small volume, "Tamerlane and Other Poems." By January, 1829, he had secured promotion to Sergeant-Major, a fact from which it would appear

that he had satisfactorily discharged his duties. Through some means the Allans had evidently kept trace of Poe, for when in this year Mrs. Allan fell seriously ill she sent for him. He arrived, however, only after her death.

Through Mr. Allan, with whom Poe became reconciled, he secured his discharge from the army and applied for entrance to West Point. Meantime, before the close of the year 1829, he had published at Baltimore "Al Aaraaf," and other poems.

Having secured his appointment to the Military Academy he bound himself to serve the United States for five years. His career at West Point, however, proved to be a continuation of his life at the University of Virginia. Brilliant in his studies, and an omnivorous reader, he held in contempt his military training and failed in roll-call and guard duties. Mr. Allan was married again, about this time, and Poe, seeing his prospects of a rich inheritance diminish, secured his discharge by wilful neglect of duty. After his debts were canceled, he left with only a few cents to his credit. Having arranged for its publication through subscriptions from the cadets, he brought out in 1831 a small volume of poems.

Settling at Baltimore, he lived quietly, in an almost lonely way, with his aunt, Mrs. Clemm, and her daughter Virginia. At the same time, he began to write short-stories, and in 1833 won for his "Manuscript Found in a Bottle" a prize of one hundred dollars. Mr. Allan, who died in March, 1834, left Poe nothing. In 1835 his fortunes had reached a low state, but he became a contributor to *The Southern Literary Messenger*, which was established at this time, and later he was made assistant editor at something over five hundred dollars a year.

In 1836, on the strength of this salary, Poe and Virginia Clemm were married, he twenty-seven, she just short of fourteen. Poe's success as a story-writer was instant, but because of his addiction to drink he proved unsatisfactory as an assistant and lost his position. In 1837 he went to New York, having just written the unfinished "Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," which found publication in that city.

From New York, Poe continued to Philadelphia, where he

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

lived for six years. Some of his chief stories were written in this period, including "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "William Wilson." The latter is interesting as the forerunner of Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." These stories were published, in 1840, under the general title, "Tales of the Arabesque and Grotesque."

Poe cherished the idea of a magazine of his own, a desire destined, however, not to be fulfilled. A scintillating literary critic, he gained a high place on the *Gentleman's Magazine*, as he had established himself on the *Messenger*, and, similarly by neglect of duty he brought about a termination of his services. When the *Gentleman's* was passing into other hands, however, and became *Graham's*, Poe was engaged as editor. The issue of April 1, 1841, the first number of his editing contained "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." After a year his connection with this magazine ceased and Poe went upon the lecture platform. In 1843, "The Gold Bug" appeared. Poe having been for some time interested in cryptography. His tales always found a ready popularity not only among the laity, but also among men of letters; Irving and Hawthorne were among those who enjoyed them.

In 1844, Poe moved with his wife to New York. As contributor to *Godey's Lady's Book*, the *Messenger* and *The North American Review*, he advanced on the three lines of poetry, criticism and story-writing. "The Raven," published in 1845, established his widespread popularity and brought him fame. "The Cask of Amontillado" first appeared in *Godey's*, November, 1846.

But with all his genius Poe suffered the pangs of poverty. In 1846, he moved out to Fordham, in what is now The Bronx, of New York City, to a small cottage yet standing. There he lived, often aided by friends in securing the essentials of life, to the time of Virginia's death in 1847. Poe survived her only until October 7, 1849. He died in Baltimore and was buried there.

Edgar Allan Poe ranks first, historically, as a short-story writer, in that he was the first to recognize fully the nature

EDGAR ALLAN POE

is type of fiction, to define its limits, to suggest its possibilities, and to exemplify brilliantly his theories. Irving and Thorne had improved the "tale," as it were; Poe definitely took away from the old order and blazed a new trail, preparing the way for succeeding writers. He is the father of short-story. He showed by unerring illustration, in his use of the gruesome, how to secure singleness of effect, and before how to create a strongly unified impression upon the mind of the reader. In addition, he is the inventor of detective story: his Dupin is the literary ancestor of Sherlock Holmes.

her stories by Poe:

"Ligeia."

"Berenice."

"The Pit and the Pendulum."

"The Masque of the Red Death."

"The Tell-tale Heart."

"The Gold Bug."

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue."

"The Purloined Letter."

connection with "The Cask of Amontillado," read:

"Accursed House" ("La Grande Brétèche"), by H. de Balzac (In "Balzac's Shorter Stories").

"Duchess at Prayer," by Edith Wharton (In "Crucial Instances").

"Pasha's Garden," by H. G. Dwight (In "Stamboul Nights").

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

BY FRANCIS BRET HARTE

I do not think that we ever knew his real name. Our ignorance of it certainly never gave us any social inconvenience for at Sandy Bar¹ in 1854 most men were christened anew. Sometimes these appellatives were derived from some distinctive of dress, as in the case of "Dungaree Jack"; or from some peculiarity of habit, as shown in "Saleratus Bill," so called from an undue proportion of that chemical in his daily bread; or from some unlucky slip, as exhibited in "The Iron Pirate," a mild, inoffensive man, who earned that beautiful title by his unfortunate mispronunciation of the term "iron pyrites." Perhaps this may have been the beginning of a rude heraldry; but I am constrained to think that it was because a man's real name in that day rested solely upon his own unsupported statement. "Call yourself Clifford, do you say?" said Boston, addressing a timid new-comer with infinite scorn. "hell is full of such Cliffords!" He then introduced the unfortunate man, whose name happened to be really Clifford, as "Jay-bird Charley,"—an unhallowed inspiration of the moment that clung to him ever after.²

But to return to Tennessee's Partner, whom we never knew by any other than this relative title; that he had ever existed as a separate and distinct individuality we only learned later. It seems that in 1853 he left Poker Flat to go to San Francisco, ostensibly to procure a wife. He never got any farther than Stockton. At that place he was attracted by a young person who waited upon the table at the hotel where he took his meals. One morning he said something to her which caused her to smile not unkindly, to somewhat coquettishly break her plate of toast over his upturned, serious, simple face, and

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

retreat to the kitchen. He followed her, and emerged a few moments later, covered with more toast and victory. That very week they were married by a Justice of the Peace, and returned to Poker Flat. I am aware that something more might be made of this episode, but I prefer to tell it as it was current at Sandy Bar,—in the gulches and bar-rooms,—where all sentiment was modified by a strong sense of humor.

Of their married felicity but little is known, perhaps for the reason that Tennessee, then living with his partner, one day took occasion to say something to the bride on his own account, at which, it is said, she smiled not unkindly and hastily retreated,—this time as far as Marysville, where Tennessee followed her, and where they went to housekeeping without the aid of a Justice of the Peace.³ Tennessee's Partner took the loss of his wife simply and seriously, as was his fashion. But to everybody's surprise, when Tennessee one day returned from Marysville,⁴ without his partner's wife,—he having smiled and retreated with somebody else,—Tennessee's Partner was the first man to shake his hand⁵ and greet him with affection. The boys who had gathered in the town to see the shooting were naturally indignant. Their indignation might have found vent in sarcasm but for a certain look in Tennessee's Partner's eye that indicated a lack of humorous appreciation. In fact, he was a grave man, with steady application to practical detail which was unpleasant in a difficulty.

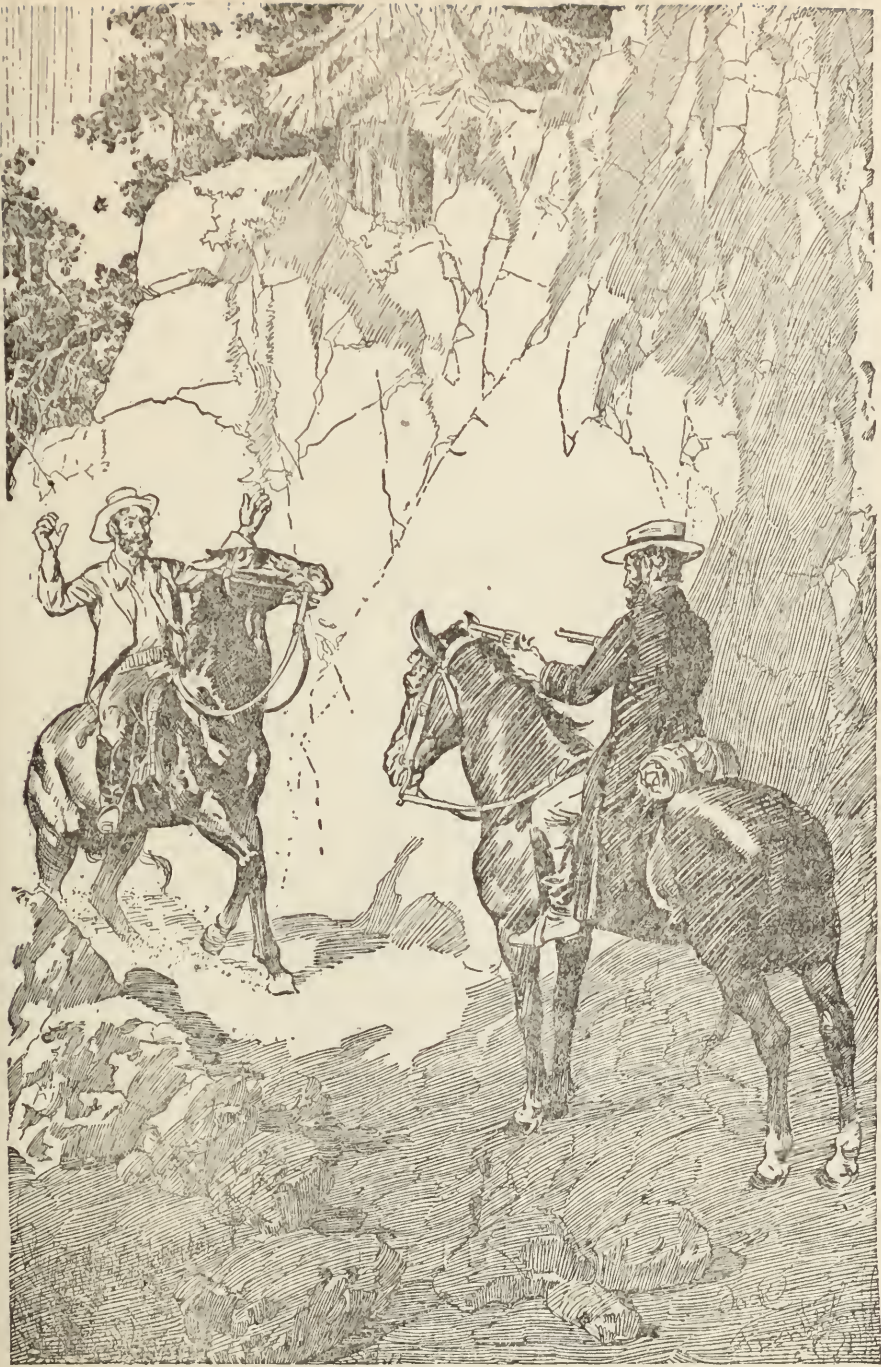
Meanwhile a popular feeling against Tennessee had grown up on the Bar. He was known to be a gambler;⁶ he was suspected to be a thief. In these suspicions Tennessee's Partner was equally compromised; his continued intimacy with Tennessee after the affair above quoted could only be accounted for on the hypothesis of a copartnership of crime. At last Tennessee's guilt became flagrant. One day he overtook a stranger on his way to Red Dog. The stranger afterward related that Tennessee beguiled the time with interesting anecdote and reminiscence, but illogically concluded the interview with the following words: "And now, young man, I'll trouble

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

you for your knife, your pistols, and your money. You see your weppings might get you into trouble at Red Dog, and your money's a temptation to the evilly disposed. I think you said your address was San Francisco. I shall endeavor to call." ⁷ It may be stated here that Tennessee had a fine flow of humor, which no business preoccupation could wholly subdue.

This exploit was his last. Red Dog and Sandy Bar made common cause against the highwayman. Tennessee was hunted in very much the same fashion as his prototype, the grizzly. As the toils closed around him, he made a desperate dash through the Bar, emptying his revolver at the crowd before the Arcade Saloon, and so on up Grizzly Cañon; but at its farther extremity he was stopped by a small man on a gray horse. The men looked at each other a moment in silence. Both were fearless, both self-possessed and independent; and both types of a civilization that in the seventeenth century would have been called heroic, but, in the nineteenth, simply "reckless." "What have you got there?—I call," said Tennessee, quietly. "Two bowers and an ace," said the stranger as quietly, showing two revolvers and a bowieknife. "That takes me," returned Tennessee; and with this gamblers' epigram, he threw away his useless pistol, and rode back with his captor. ⁸

It was a warm night. ⁹ The cool breeze which usually sprang up with the going down of the sun behind the *chaparral* ¹⁰ crested mountain was that evening withheld from Sandy Bar. The little cañon was stifling with heated resinous odors, and the decaying drift-wood on the Bar sent forth faint, sickening exhalations. The feverishness of day, and its fierce passions still filled the camp. Lights moved restlessly along the bank of the river, striking no answering reflection from its tawny current. Against the blackness of the pines the windows of the old loft above the express-office ¹¹ stood out staringly bright; and through their curtainless panes the loungers below could see the forms of those who were even then deciding the fate of Tennessee. And above all this, etched on the dark



"Two bowers and an ace," said the stranger, as quietly, showing two revolvers and a bowieknife

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

firmament, rose the Sierra, remote and passionless, crowned with remoter passionless stars.

The trial of Tennessee was conducted as fairly as was consistent with a judge and jury who felt themselves to some extent obliged to justify, in their verdict, the previous irregularities of arrest and indictment. The law of Sandy Bar was implacable, but not vengeful. The excitement and personal feeling of the chase were over; with Tennessee safe in their hands they were ready to listen patiently to any defense, which they were already satisfied was insufficient. There being no doubt in their own minds, they were willing to give the prisoner the benefit of any that might exist. Secure in the hypothesis that he ought to be hanged, on general principles, they indulged him with more latitude of defense than his reckless hardihood seemed to ask. The Judge appeared to be more anxious than the prisoner, who, otherwise unconcerned, evidently took a grim pleasure in the responsibility he had created. "I don't take any hand in this yer game," had been his invariable, but good-humored reply to all questions. The Judge—who was also his captor—for a moment vaguely regretted that he had not shot him "on sight," that morning, but presently dismissed this human weakness¹² as unworthy of the judicial mind. Nevertheless, when there was a tap at the door, and it was said that Tennessee's Partner¹³ was there on behalf of the prisoner, he was admitted at once without question. Perhaps the younger members of the jury, to whom the proceedings were becoming irksomely thoughtful, hailed him as a relief.

For he was not, certainly, an imposing figure. Short and stout, with a square face, sunburned into a preternatural redness, clad in a loose duck "jumper," and trousers streaked and splashed with red soil, his aspect under any circumstances would have been quaint, and was now even ridiculous. As he stooped to deposit at his feet a heavy carpet-bag he was carrying, it became obvious, from partially developed legends and inscriptions, that the material with which his trousers had been patched had been originally intended for a less ambitious cov-

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

ering.¹⁴ Yet he advanced with great gravity,¹⁵ and after having shaken the hand of each person in the room with labored cordiality, he wiped his serious, perplexed face on a red bandanna handkerchief, a shade lighter than his complexion, laid his powerful hand upon the table to steady himself, and thus addressed the Judge:

"I was passin' by," he began, by way of apology, "and I thought I'd just step in and see how things was gittin' on with Tennessee thar,—my pardner. It's a hot night. I disremember any sich weather before on the Bar."¹⁶

He paused a moment, but nobody volunteering any other meteorological recollection, he again had recourse to his pocket-handkerchief, and for some moments mopped his face diligently.

"Have you anything to say in behalf of the prisoner?" said the Judge, finally.

"Thet's it," said Tennessee's Partner, in a tone of relief. "I come yar as Tennessee's pardner,—knowing him nigh on four year, off and on, wet and dry, in luck and out o' luck. His ways ain't allers my ways, but thar ain't any p'int in that young man, thar ain't any liveliness as he's been up to, as I don't know. And you sez to me, sez you,—confidential-like, and between man and man,—sez you, 'Do you know anything in his behalf?' and I sez to you, sez I,—confidential-like, as between man and man,—'What should a man know of his pardner?'"

"Is this all you have to say?" asked the Judge, impatiently, feeling, perhaps, that a dangerous sympathy of humor was beginning to humanize the Court.

"Thet's so," continued Tennessee's Partner. "It ain't for me to say anything agin' him. And now, what's the case? Here's Tennessee wants money, wants it bad, and doesn't like to ask it of his old pardner. Well, what does Tennessee do? He lays for a stranger, and he fetches that stranger. And you lays for *him*, and you fetches *him*; and the honors is easy. And I put it to you, bein' a far-minded

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

man, and to you, gentlemen, all, as far-minded men, ef this isn't so."

"Prisoner," said the Judge, interrupting, "have you any questions to ask this man?"

"No! no!" continued Tennessee's Partner, hastily. "I play this yer hand alone. To come down to the bedrock, it's just this: Tennessee, thar, has played it pretty rough and expensive-like on a stranger, and on this yer camp. And now, what's the fair thing? Some would say more; some would say less. Here's seventeen hundred dollars in coarse gold and a watch,—it's about all my pile,—and call it square!" And before a hand could be raised to prevent him, he had emptied the contents of the carpet-bag upon the table.¹⁷

For a moment his life was in jeopardy. One or two men sprang to their feet, several hands groped for hidden weapons, and a suggestion to "throw him from the window" was only overridden by a gesture from the Judge. Tennessee laughed.¹⁸ And apparently oblivious of the excitement, Tennessee's Partner improved the opportunity to mop his face again with his handkerchief.

When order was restored, and the man was made to understand, by the use of forcible figures and rhetoric, that Tennessee's offense could not be condoned by money, his face took a more serious and sanguinary hue, and those who were nearest to him noticed that his rough hand trembled slightly on the table.¹⁹ He hesitated a moment as he slowly returned the gold to the carpet-bag, as if he had not yet entirely caught the elevated sense of justice which swayed the tribunal, and was perplexed with the belief that he had not offered enough. Then he turned to the Judge, and saying, "This yer is a lone hand, played alone, and without my pardner,"²⁰ he bowed to the jury and was about to withdraw, when the Judge called him back. "If you have anything to say to Tennessee, you had better say it now." For the first time that evening the eyes of the prisoner and his strange advocate met. Tennessee smiled, showed his white teeth,²¹ and, saying, "Euchred, old man!" held out his hand. Tennessee's Partner took it in his

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

own, and saying, "I just dropped in as I was passin' to see how things was gettin' on," let the hand passively fall, and adding that "it was a warm night," again mopped his face with his handkerchief, and without another word withdrew.²²

The two men never again met each other alive. For the unparalleled insult of a bribe offered to Judge Lynch—who, whether bigoted, weak, or narrow, was at least incorruptible—firmly fixed in the mind of that mythical personage any wavering determination of Tennessee's fate; and at the break of day he was marched, closely guarded, to meet it at the top of Marley's Hill.

How he met it, how cool he was, how he refused to say anything, how perfect were the arrangements of the committee, were all duly reported, with the addition of a warning moral and example to all future evil-doers, in the *Red Dog Clarion*,²³ by its editor, who was present, and to whose vigorous English I cheerfully refer the reader. But the beauty of that midsummer morning, the blessed amity of earth and air and sky, the awakened life of the free woods and hills, the joyous renewal and promise of Nature, and above all, the infinite Serenity that thrilled through each, was not reported, as not being a part of the social lesson. And yet, when the weak and foolish deed was done, and a life, with its possibilities and responsibilities, had passed out of the misshapen thing that dangled between earth and sky,²⁴ the birds sang, the flowers bloomed, the sun shone, as cheerily as before; and possibly the *Red Dog Clarion* was right.

Tennessee's Partner was not in the group that surrounded the ominous tree. But as they turned to disperse attention was drawn to the singular appearance of a motionless donkey-cart halted at the side of the road. As they approached, they at once recognized the venerable "Jenny" and the two-wheeled cart as the property of Tennessee's Partner,—used by him in carrying dirt from his claim; and a few paces distant the owner of the equipage himself, sitting under a buckeye-tree, wiping the perspiration from his glowing face. In answer to an inquiry, he said he had come for the body of the "dis-

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

eased," "if it was all the same to the committee." He didn't wish to "hurry anything"; he could "wait". He was not working that day; and when the gentlemen were done with the "diseased," he would take him. "Ef thar is any present," he added, in his simple, serious way, "as would care to jine in the fun'l, they kin come."²⁵ Perhaps it was from a sense of humor, which I have already intimated was a feature of Sandy Bar,—perhaps it was from something even better than that; but two-thirds of the loungers accepted the invitation at once.

It was noon when the body of Tennessee was delivered into the hands of his partner. As the cart drew up to the fatal tree, we noticed that it contained a rough, oblong box,—apparently made from a section of sluicing,—and half filled with bark and the tassels of pine. The cart was further decorated with slips of willow, and made fragrant with buckeye-blossoms. When the body was deposited in the box, Tennessee's Partner drew over it a piece of tarred canvas, and gravely mounting the narrow seat in front, with his feet upon the shafts, urged the little donkey forward. The equipage moved slowly on, at that decorous pace which was habitual with "Jenny" even under less solemn circumstances. The men—half curiously, half jestingly, but all good-humoredly—strolled along beside the cart; some in advance, some a little in the rear of the homely catafalque.²⁶ But, whether from the narrowing of the road or some present sense of decorum, as the cart passed on, the company fell to the rear in couples, keeping step, and otherwise assuming the external show of a formal procession. Jack Folinsbee, who had at the outset played a funeral march in dumb show upon an imaginary trombone, desisted, from a lack of sympathy and appreciation,—not having, perhaps, your true humorist's capacity to be content with the enjoyment of his own fun.²⁷

The way led through Grizzly Cañon,—by this time clothed in funeral drapery and shadows.²⁸ The redwoods, burying their moccasined feet in the red soil, stood in Indian-file along the track, trailing an uncouth benediction from their bending

boughs upon the passing bier. A hare, surprised into helpless inactivity, sat upright and pulsating in the ferns by the roadside, as the *cortége* went by. Squirrels hastened to gain a secure outlook from higher boughs; and the blue-jays, spreading their wings, fluttered before them like outriders, until the outskirts of Sandy Bar were reached, and the solitary cabin of Tennessee's Partner.

Viewed under more favorable circumstances, it would not have been a cheerful place. The unpicturesque site, the rude and unlovely outlines, the unsavory details, which distinguish the nest-building of the California miner, were all here, with the dreariness of decay super-added. A few paces from the cabin there was a rough enclosure, which, in the brief days of Tennessee's Partner's matrimonial felicity, had been used as a garden, but was now overgrown with fern. As we approached it we were surprised to find that what we had taken for a recent attempt at cultivation was the broken soil about an open grave.²⁹

The cart was halted before the enclosure; and rejecting the offers of assistance with the same air of simple self-reliance he had displayed throughout, Tennessee's Partner lifted the rough coffin on his back, and deposited it, unaided, within the shallow grave. He then nailed down the board which served as a lid; and mounting the little mound of earth beside it, took off his hat, and slowly mopped his face with his handkerchief. This the crowd felt was a preliminary to speech; and they disposed themselves variously on stumps and boulders, and sat expectant.

"When a man," began Tennessee's Partner, slowly, "has been running free all day, what's the natural thing for him to do? Why, to come home. And if he ain't in a condition to go home, what can his best friend do! Why, bring him home! And here's Tennessee has been running free, and we brings him home from his wandering." He paused, and picked up a fragment of quartz, rubbed it thoughtfully on his sleeve, and went on: "It ain't the first time that I've packed him on my back, as you see'd me now. It ain't the first time

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

that I brought him to this yer cabin when he couldn't help himself; it ain't the first time that I and Jinny have waited for him on yon hill, and picked him up and so fetched him home, when he couldn't speak, and didn't know me. And now that it's the last time, why—" he paused, and rubbed the quartz gently on his sleeve—"you see it's sort of rough on his pardner. And now, gentlemen," he added, abruptly, picking up his long-handled shovel, "the fun'l 's over; and my thanks, and Tennessee's thanks, to you for your trouble."³⁰

Resisting any proffers of assistance, he began to fill in the grave, turning his back upon the crowd, that after a few moments' hesitation gradually withdrew. As they crossed the little ridge that hid Sandy Bar from view, some, looking back, thought they could see Tennessee's Partner, his work done, sitting upon the grave, his shovel between his knees, and his face buried in his red bandanna handkerchief. But it was argued by others that you couldn't tell his face from his handkerchief at that distance; and this point remained undecided.³¹

In the reaction that followed the feverish excitement of that day, Tennessee's Partner was not forgotten. A secret investigation had cleared him of any complicity in Tennessee's guilt, and left only a suspicion of his general sanity. Sandy Bar made a point of calling on him, and proffering various uncouth, but well-meant kindnesses. But from that day his rude health and great strength seemed visibly to decline; and when the rainy season fairly set in, and the tiny grass-blades were beginning to peep from the rocky mound above Tennessee's grave, he took to his bed.³²

One night, when the pines beside the cabin were swaying in the storm, and trailing their slender fingers over the roof, and the roar and rush of the swollen river were heard below, Tennessee's Partner lifted his head from the pillow, saying, "It is time to go for Tennessee; I must put 'Jinny' in the cart"; and would have risen from his bed but for the restraint of his attendant. Struggling, he still pursued his singular fancy: "There, now, steady, Jinny,—steady, old girl. How dark it

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

is! Look out for the ruts,—and look out for him, too, old gal. Sometimes, you know, when he's blind drunk, he drops down right in the trail. Keep on straight up to the pine on the top of the hill. Thar—I told you so!—thar he is,—coming this way, too,—all by himself, sober, and his face a-shining. Tennessee! Pardner!"

And so they met.³³

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

Born in Albany, New York, August 25, 1839, Francis Bret Harte became associated as a literary figure not with the eastern but with the western United States. At the age of fifteen he went to San Francisco, and there mingled with fortune seekers whom the discovery of gold had drawn from over all the world. Bret Harte followed in the wake of these adventurers,—“the Argonauts of '49,”—to the camping grounds of the new country. He, too, tried his luck in looking for gold, after which he served as messenger for an Express Company. On his seat beside the driver, represented later by his fearless “Yuba Bill,” he had excellent opportunity for observing the country. Having been successfully a drug store assistant, printer, and schoolmaster, he widened his experience further by fighting through two campaigns in wars with the Indians. Then, yet a young man, he returned to San Francisco, determined to settle down. He had known pioneer life long enough to desire the comforts of civilization.

He took, perhaps, the first step in his literary career when he began contributing to *The Golden Era*, and this was about the time of his marriage to Miss Anna Griswold in August, 1862. To improve the state of his finances, he worked in the General Surveyor's Office, and afterward served as Secretary to the Superintendent of the United States Mint. In the Mint days he met Mark Twain, who was at this time identifying himself with California and whose “Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” is a literary landmark of the place and epoch. Later, he knew Joaquin Miller, the poet of the Sierras. Having become editor of *The Overland Monthly* in 1868, Bret Harte contributed to the second number “The Luck of Roaring Camp.” Stockton's “The Lady or the Tiger?” Aldrich's “Mar-

jorie Daw," and these stories created a stir in the world of fiction, and each is now a recognized classic in the art of story writing. "The Luck" was praised by Dickens, whom the author had long admired, and brought from him a letter of congratulation.

This story marked a turning point in the fortunes of Bret Harte, not yet thirty years of age. "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," "Miggles," "Tennessee's Partner" and other stories came rapidly from his pen, or seemed to come rapidly, for as a matter of fact Bret Harte was a careful and painstakingly deliberate writer. At the same time, he continued his experiments in verse, and in "Plain Language from Truthful James" (better known as "The Heathen Chine") he achieved instant success and popularity. In 1871 he left California and came east.

There was, however, with his removal to New York no change in the type of his fiction. Frances Kemble once wrote of him: "It is part of his great merit to make one feel how much good may remain in his 'good-for-noughts.'" The "good-for-noughts," whom he preferred were the waifs and strays of civilization, found in the trail of the fortune-hunters. In addition to his writing, he gave lectures in the American cities of the East and Middle West, hard-pressed as he was to supply funds for a generous hospitality. In 1878, having accepted the consulate of Crefeld, he left his family at Sea Cliff, Long Island, and hastened to Prussia, as he said, with a French dictionary in one pocket and a German dictionary in the other. He stopped in London long enough to visit the tomb of Dickens, in Westminster Abbey.

After some time in Crefeld, he went to England (1879), the guest of Froude, the historian. About the year 1880 he was transferred to Glasgow, but spent much of his time in London and Paris. According to the humor of the novelist William Black, whom he had met in Scotland, about the only place at which Bret Harte could not be found was the Glasgow consulate. He was removed from the office in 1885, after which

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

time he spent the rest of his life in England among friends and acquaintances, with whom he had become a favorite. It would appear that his family joined him there, as we hear of his writing in 1897 about spending Christmas with his son, and know that his wife attended his funeral in 1902. He died on May fifth of that year, and was buried in Frimley churchyard, Camberley, in Surrey.

Bret Harte's distinctive contribution to the literature of the short-story is the emphasis of place, or locale, as a strong contributory factor to the general value of the narrative. Nowhere, perhaps, except in the far west of the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century could the action of his best stories occur. Further, he humanized characters in suggesting that the worst man has some good in his make-up. Poe's men are monomaniacs, or men whose actions are motivated by some single passion, as of revenge. Bret Harte's "bad" men are tempered and balanced by virtues logically ascribed: Oakhurst, the gambler of Poker Flat, and Tennessee, the villain of the present story, meet death, not cringing, but with reckless bravery.

Other stories by Bret Harte:

"The Outcasts of Poker Flat."

"Miss."

"Miggles."

"The Luck of Roaring Camp."

"A Mercury of the Foothills."

"Colonel Starbottle for the Plaintiff."

"Prosper's Old Mother."

In connection with "Tennessee's Partner," read:

"The Substitute," by Prosper Mérimée (In "Ten Tales").

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"Marsh Rosemary," by Sarah Orne Jewett (In "A White Heron").

"The Exit of Anse Dugmore," by Irvin Cobb (In "The Escape of Mr. Trim").

"Markheim," by Robert Louis Stevenson.

THE LAST LESSON *

A Little Alsatian's Story

BY ALPHONSE DAUDET

That morning I was very late in going to school, and was much afraid of being scolded; all the more so, as M. Hamel had told us he would question us upon the participles, and I did not know the first word. For a moment I thought of playing truant and setting off across the country.

The weather was so warm and clear!

One heard the blackbirds whistling at the edge of the wood, and in the Rippert meadow, behind the saw-mill, the Prussians who were drilling. All that tempted me much more than the rule of participles; but I had the strength to resist and I ran fast to school.

In passing by the mayor's office, I saw that a group of people had stopped at the little bulletin board. For two years all the bad news had come to us from there, lost battles, requisitions, orders from headquarters; and without pausing I said:

"What is it this time?"

Then, as I crossed the square on the run, the blacksmith Wachter, who was there with his apprentice engaged in reading the notice, cried out to me:

"Do not hurry so, youngster; you will arrive soon enough at your school!"¹

I thought he was making fun of me, and out of breath I went into Mr Hamel's little yard.

Usually, at the beginning of a class, there was a great uproar which could be heard in the street,—desks opening and closing, lessons being repeated all together at the top of the

* Translated by the editor.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

voice, the pupils stopping their ears with their fingers, the better to learn them, and the big rule of the master tapping upon the table,

"A little silence!"

I counted on all this ~~din~~ to reach my seat without notice, but as luck would have it, on this day everything was quiet,² as on Sunday morning. Through the open window I saw my schoolmates already in their places, and Mr Hamel pacing back and forth with the terrible iron-tipped rule under his arm. I had to open the door and enter in the midst of the great stillness. Well you may think I blushed and was afraid.

But nothing happened.³ Mr Hamel looked at me without anger and said to me very gently:

"Go quickly to your place, my little Franz; we were going to begin without you."

I stepped over the bench and sat down at once at my desk. Then only, a little recovered from my fright, I noticed that our master had on his beautiful green frock coat, his carefully plaited shirt-frill, and the skull-cap of embroidered black silk which he wore only on the days of inspection and distribution of prizes.⁴ Besides, there was something unusual and solemn about the whole class. But what surprised me most was to see at the end of the room, on the benches that were usually vacant, the men of the village seated and silent like us; old Hauser with his three-cornered hat, the ex-mayor, the former postman, and others.⁵ They all seemed sad; and Hauser had brought an old dog-eared spelling book, which he held wide open on his knees, with his big spectacles placed across the pages.

While I was marveling at all this, M^r Hamel had gone up into his chair, and in the same gentle and serious voice with which he had greeted me, he said to us:

"My children, it is the last time I take the class. The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of ~~Alsace and Lorraine~~. . . . The new teacher comes to-morrow. To-day's is your last French lesson. I beg you to be very attentive."

THE LAST LESSON

These few words overwhelmed me. Ah, the villains, that was what they had posted at the *mairie*! 59007

My last lesson in French!

And I who hardly knew how to write. . . . I should never learn. I should have to stop there! How I blamed myself for the time lost, for cutting classes, to hunt bird's eggs or to practice sliding on the Saar. My books, which only a moment ago I had found so tiresome, so heavy to carry, my Grammar, my Scripture History, seemed to me old friends from whom I should find it hard to part. It was the same with M.^r Hamel. The idea that he was going to leave, that I should never see him again, made me forget punishments, blows from the ruler.⁶

Poor man!

It was in honor of this last lesson that he had put on his handsome Sunday clothes; and now I understood why the old men of the village had come to sit at the end of the room. It was as if to say they were sorry they had not come more often to this school of theirs. It was also a way of thanking our master for his forty years of good service, and of paying their respects to the departing fatherland.

Such was the course of my thoughts, when I heard my name called. It was my turn to recite. What would I not have given to be able to say from beginning to end the famous rule of the participles, in a loud, clear voice, without a mistake! But I got tangled up in the first words, and I stood swaying against my bench, with a bursting heart, not daring to raise my head. I heard M.^r Hamel speaking to me:

"I shall not scold you, my little Franz; you should be punished enough. That's the way of it. Every day one says to oneself, 'Bah! I have time enough. I will learn to-morrow.' And then you see what happens. . . . Ah, it has been the great misfortune of our Alsace always to put off learning until to-morrow.⁷ Now these people have the right to say to us: 'What! you pretend to be French, and you do not know how to speak or write your own language?' In all that, my poor

Franz, it is not you who are most guilty. We have all a good share of reproaches for ourselves.

"Your parents have not sufficiently cared to see you instructed. They liked better to send you to till the fields or to work at the spinning mills, for the sake of a few extra sous. As for myself, have I nothing with which to reproach myself? Have I not often made you water my garden instead of working? And when I wished to go fishing for trout, did I hesitate to give you a holiday? . . ."

Then, from one thing to another, M. Hamel began to talk to us about the French language, saying that it was the most beautiful language in the world, the clearest, the most solid,⁸ that it should be kept among us and never forgotten; because when a people falls into slavery, so long as it holds fast its language it holds the key of its prison.* Then he took a grammar and read us our lesson. I was astonished to see how well I understood. Everything he said seemed to me easy, easy. I believe also that I had never listened so well, and that as for him he had never put so much patience into his explanations. One would have said that before going away the poor man wished to give us all his knowledge, to make it enter our heads at a single blow.

When the lesson was over, we went on to writing. For that day, M. Hamel had prepared for us entirely new examples, on which he had written in a beautiful round hand: *France, Alsace, France, Alsace*. They looked like little flags waving all round the class, hung to the rods of our desks. It was something to see how each one applied himself, and in what silence. There was nothing to be heard but the scratching of the pens on the paper. Once some beetles flew in,⁹ but nobody paid any attention, not even the very little ones, who were busy tracing their strokes with a courage and conscience, as if even the pot-hooks were in French. Upon the roof of the school-house pigeons cooed low, and listening, I said to myself:

"Will they not make them sing in German, too?"

* "*S'il tient sa langue,—il tient la clé qui de ses chaînes le délivre.*"—F. Mistral.

THE LAST LESSON

From time to time when I lifted my eyes from my page, I saw M. Hamel motionless in his chair, taking a long look at the objects around him, as if he wished to carry off in his mind's eye all the little school-house. . . . Think! For forty years¹⁰ he had been there in the same place, with his yard in front of him and his class just the same. Only the seats and the desks had been polished, rubbed by use, the walnut trees in the yard had grown taller, and the hop-vine which he had himself planted wreathed about the windows and up to the roof. What a heart-break it must have been to the poor man to leave these things, and to hear his sister as she went and came in the room overhead, packing their trunks. For they were to go on the morrow, to leave the country forever.

All the same he had the courage to go on with the recitation to the end. After the writing, we had our history lesson; and then the little ones sang the ~~BA, BE, BI, BO, BU~~. Away at the end of the room old Hauser had put on his spectacles, and holding his A, B, C book in both hands, he spelled out the letters with them. He, too, was visibly applying himself; his voice trembled with emotion, and it was so funny to hear him that we all wanted to laugh and to cry. Ah, I shall remember that last lesson!

Suddenly the church clock struck noon, ~~then the Angelus~~.¹¹ At the same moment the trumpets of the Prussians who were returning from drill blared under our windows. . . . M. Hamel rose,¹² very pale, from his chair. Never had he appeared to me so tall.

"My friends," he said, "My friends, I . . . I . . ."

But something stifled him. He could not finish his sentence.

Then he turned to the black-board, took a piece of chalk, and bearing on it with all his strength, he wrote as large as he could:

"VIVE LA FRANCE!"

Then he came to a stop; his head pressed against the wall, and without speaking he signed to us with his hand:

"That is all . . . Go."

ALPHONSE DAUDET

Alphonse Daudet was born at Nîmes, May 13, 1840, and died in Paris, December 16, 1897.

His father, who was a silk manufacturer, lost his fortune when Alphonse was nine years of age and removed to Lyons in the hope of rehabilitating himself. After seven years of vain endeavor, however, the family disbanded. Those were years of hardship, though they held for the boy a fair formal education, much reading and eager trials at writing. The story of Alphonse's youth is told in Ernest Daudet's "My Brother and I" ("Mon Frère et Moi"), and he himself has recorded in the earlier pages of "Le Petit Chose" his painful experience in teaching at the age of sixteen or seventeen. In 1857 he fled to Paris, where Ernest, three years his elder, was already trying to earn a living as journalist. Even after his escape to this freer world, he used to wake with horror, thinking he was back among his worst pupils. His reminiscences of these and later Parisian days are to be found in the "Memories of a Man of Letters" ("Souvenirs d'un Homme de Lettres"), and in "Thirty Years in Paris" ("Trente Ans de Paris").

After obtaining employment on the *Figaro*, he published (1858) a volume of verse. This drew the admiration of the Empress Eugénie, who got for him a secretaryship to the Duke of Morny, Minister of State. In his official position he had ample time to study the society of Paris at close range. According to the Memoirs of his poet friend, Frédéric Mistral, the most the young man ever did was to go once a month to see whether his patron was flourishing and in a good temper. At this period Daudet was a handsome Bohemian: his skin was clear; his black eyes were shaded by long lashes, and he wore his thick crop of hair flowing over his shoulders. Moreover, his spirits ran audaciously high. "He had quicksilver in

ALPHONSE DAUDET

his veins," says one of his friends. Daring and even foolhardy, he threw himself into the river one day to find out if the water was deep. Fortunately, a fisherman saved him with a boat-hook. On another occasion he dashed into a wedding procession and kissed the bride, narrowly escaping the consequences of the groom's anger.

That his official position was used to advantage may be seen by a survey of his works, "The Nabob," "Kings in Exile," and "Nouma Roumestan." In 1866 he published "Lettres de Mon Moulin," usually regarded as his best work. The next year he married Julia Allard, a gifted woman, with whom he lived happily the rest of his life. Léon, the oldest of their three children, has preserved much of his father's personality, and many of his ideas about writing, in the volume entitled "Alphonse Daudet."

When the Franco-Prussian war broke out, Daudet enlisted and underwent the fortunes of a soldier. This period of his life is reflected in a number of short-stories, particularly in "The Siege of Berlin," and in "The Last Lesson" ("La Dernière Classe").

On visits to the vicinity of Avignon, Daudet collected material for his "Tartarin of Tarascon." This work, published in 1872, introduces one of his most interesting characters and exploits Daudet's peculiar humor. In humor as well as in pathos the French author resembles Dickens, though he defended himself against the charge of imitation. Tartarin himself is a descendant of Don Quixote, as he is a forerunner of William J. Locke's Aristide Pujol. "Tartarin sur les Alpes," the second of the series, celebrating Tartarin as a mountain climber, is perhaps the best of the trilogy immortalizing the innocent vanity of the Tarascon hero.

Daudet also wrote stories for children, such as "La Belle Nivernaise," the tale of an old river barge and her crew. Likewise, he made an excellent instructor for his own children, in spite of his former painful experiences with other pupils. He taught them appreciation of classic literature, love of simplicity in style, and the value of truth in all relations of life.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Among his friends, Daudet numbered Flaubert, the Goncourts, Turgenieff, and Maupassant—the giants, as Léon used to call them. Of the older French authors he admired Montaigne, Pascal, and Rousseau; of the Romans—Tacitus, Lucretius, and Virgil. He loved those artists of the brush usually classed as realists: Rembrandt, Franz Hals, Rousseau, and Millet. He was gifted with powers of observation and saw discerningly, whether he only walked down the Champs Elysées with his son, or whether he took a trip to London, Algiers, Corsica, or his old Provencale home. Tartarin reflects the spirit of Provence, his native Midi, as “The Nabob,” “Jack,” and others reflect the spirit of Paris of the third empire. These two types of his work afford a striking example of contrast.

In his early days he dashed at his writing when inflamed by his subject: his work shows that he believed as he said, “Talent is an intensity of life.” Later, however, he submitted to daily routine, though never too busy to see a friend or counsel a young man.

A keen observer, he faithfully reproduced life; a skilled architect, he selected the material he needed and carefully organized it; a most dramatic writer, he preferred to let his characters act rather than reason. He had the peculiarly happy faculty of getting under the skins of his characters, as he put it, an ability which he declared was one of the secrets of Shakespeare’s marvelous characterization. Interested in humanity, he made his emotional appeal. He never tried to please or astonish, but kept to his watchword of sincerity. In his style he shunned verbosity, sought clearness and limpidity, and he achieved picturesque conciseness.

Other stories having a patriotic theme:

“The Man Without a Country,” by Edward Everett Hale.
“The Colors,” by Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews (In

ALPHONSE DAUDET

Scribner's Magazine, July, 1916; published separately under the title, "Old Glory").

"The Flag of Their Country," by Rudyard Kipling (In "Stalky and Company").

"The Consul," by Richard Harding Davis (In "The Man Who Could Not Lose;" also published separately).

Other stories by Daudet:

"Old Folk," "The Death of the Dauphin," "Legend of the Man with the Golden Brain," "The Pope's Mule" (In "Letters from My Mill").

"The Siege of Berlin," "Three Low Masses," "The Cure of Cucugnan," "The Boy Spy," "Mother," "The Pope is Dead" (In "Monday Tales").

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Denis de Beaulieu was not yet two-and-twenty, but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough, war-faring epoch; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honorable fashion, and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind, went out to pay a visit in the gray of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding¹ on the young man's part. He would have done better to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England² under a mixed command; and though Denis was there on safe-conduct, his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September, 1429; the weather had fallen sharp;³ a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind. The night fell swiftly; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire-top, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds—a black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose, and began to hoot under archways and roar amid the tree-tops in the valley below the town.

Denis de Beaulieu walked fast and was soon knocking at his

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

friend's door; but though he promised himself to stay only a little while and make an early return, his welcome was so pleasant, and he found so much to delay him, that it was already long past midnight⁴ before he said good-by upon the threshold. The wind had fallen again in the meanwhile; the night was as black as the grave; not a star, nor a glimmer of moonshine, slipped through the canopy of cloud. Denis was ill-acquainted with the intricate lanes of Château Landon; even by daylight he had found some trouble in picking his way; and in this absolute darkness he soon lost it altogether. He was certain of one thing only—to keep mounting the hill; for his friend's house lay at the lower end, or tail, of Château Landon, while the inn was up at the head, under the great church spire. With this clue to go upon he stumbled and groped forward, now breathing more freely in open places where there was a good slice of sky overhead, now feeling along the wall in stifling closes. It is an eerie and mysterious position to be thus submerged in opaque blackness in an almost unknown town. The silence is terrifying in its possibilities. The touch of cold window-bars to the exploring hand startles the man like the touch of a toad; the inequalities of the pavement shake his heart into his mouth; a piece of denser darkness threatens an ambushade or a chasm in the pathway; and where the air is brighter, the houses put on strange and bewildering appearances, as if to lead him farther from his way. For Denis, who had to regain his inn without attracting notice, there was real danger as well as mere discomfort in the walk; and he went warily and boldly at once, and at every corner paused to make an observation.

He had been for some time threading a lane so narrow that he could touch a wall on either hand when it began to open out and go sharply downward. Plainly this lay no longer in the direction of his inn; but the hope of a little more light tempted him forward to reconnoiter. The lane ended in a terrace with a bartizan wall, which gave an outlook between high houses, as out of an embrasure, into the valley lying dark and formless several hundred feet below. Denis looked down, and could

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

discern a few tree-tops waving and a single speck of brightness where the river ran across a weir. The weather was clearing up, and the sky had lightened, so as to show the outline of the heavier clouds and the dark margin of the hills. By the uncertain glimmer, the house on his left hand should be a place of some pretensions; it was surmounted by several pinnacles and turret-tops; the round stern of a chapel, with a fringe of flying buttresses, projected boldly from the main block; and the door was sheltered under a deep porch carved with figures and overhung by two long gargoyles. The windows of the chapel gleamed⁵ through their intricate tracery with a light as of many tapers, and threw out the buttresses and the peaked roof in a more intense blackness against the sky. It was plainly the hotel of some great family of the neighborhood; and as it reminded Denis of a town house of his own⁶ at Bourges, he stood for some time gazing up at it and mentally gauging the skill of the architects and the consideration of the two families.⁷

There seemed to be no issue to the terrace but the lane by which he had reached it; he could only retrace his steps, but he had gained some notion of his whereabouts, and hoped by this means to hit the main thoroughfare and speedily regain the inn. He was reckoning without that chapter of accidents⁸ which was to make this night memorable above all others⁹ in his career; for he had not gone back above a hundred yards before he saw a light coming to meet him, and heard loud voices speaking together in the echoing narrows of the lane. It was a party of men-at-arms going the night round with torches. Denis assured himself that they had all been making free with the wine-bowl, and were in no mood to be particular about safe-conducts or the niceties of chivalrous war. It was as like as not that they would kill him like a dog and leave him where he fell. The situation was inspiring but nervous. Their own torches would conceal him from sight, he reflected; and he hoped that they would drown the noise of his footsteps with their own empty voices. If he were but fleet and silent, he might evade their notice altogether.

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

Unfortunately, as he turned to beat a retreat, his foot rolled upon a pebble;¹⁰ he fell against the wall with an ejaculation, and his sword rang loudly on the stones. Two or three voices demanded who went there—some in French, some in English; but Denis made no reply, and ran the faster down the lane. Once upon the terrace, he paused to look back. They still kept calling after him, and just then began to double the pace in pursuit, with a considerable clank of armor, and great tossing of the torchlight to and fro in the narrow jaws of the passage.

Denis cast a look around and darted into the porch. There he might escape observation, or—if that were too much to expect—was in a capital posture whether for parley or defense. So thinking, he drew his sword and tried to set his back against the door. To his surprise, it yielded¹¹ behind his weight; and though he turned in a moment, continued to swing back on oiled and noiseless hinges, until it stood wide open on a black interior. When things fall out opportunely for the person concerned, he is not apt to be critical about the how or why, his own immediate personal convenience seeming a sufficient reason for the strangest oddities and revolutions in our sublunary things; and so Denis, without a moment's hesitation, stepped within and partly closed the door behind him to conceal his place of refuge. Nothing was further from his thoughts than to close it altogether; but for some inexplicable reason—perhaps by a spring or a weight—the ponderous mass of oak whipped itself out of his fingers and clanked to, with a formidable rumble and a noise like the falling of an automatic bar.

The round, at that very moment, debouched upon the terrace and proceeded to summon him with shouts and curses. He heard them ferreting in the dark corners; the stock of a lance even rattled along the outer surface of the door behind which he stood; but these gentlemen were in too high a humor to be long delayed, and soon made off down a corkscrew pathway which had escaped Denis's observation, and passed out of sight and hearing along the battlements of the town.

Denis breathed again. He gave them a few minutes' grace for fear of accidents, and then groped about for some means of opening the door and slipping forth again. The inner surface was quite smooth, not a handle, not a molding, not a projection of any sort. He got his finger-nails round the edges and pulled, but the mass was immovable. He shook it, it was as firm as a rock. Denis de Beaulieu frowned and gave vent to a little noiseless whistle. What ailed the door? ¹² he wondered. Why was it open? How came it to shut so easily and so effectually after him? There was something obscure and under-hand about all this, that was little to the young man's fancy. It looked like a snare; and yet who could suppose a snare in such a quiet by-street and in a house of so prosperous and even noble an exterior? And yet—snare or no snare, intentionally or unintentionally—here he was, prettily trapped; and for the life of him he could see no way out of it again. The darkness began to weigh upon him. He gave ear; all was silence without, but within and close by he seemed to catch a faint sighing, a faint sobbing rustle, a little stealthy creak—as though many persons were at his side, holding themselves quite still, and governing even their respiration with the extreme of slyness. The idea went to his vitals with a shock, and he faced about suddenly as if to defend his life. Then, for the first time, he became aware of a light about the level of his eyes and at some distance in the interior of the house—a vertical thread of light, widening towards the bottom, such as might escape between two wings of arras over a doorway. To see anything was a relief to Denis; it was like a piece of solid ground to a man laboring in a morass; his mind seized upon it with avidity; and he stood staring at it and trying to piece together some logical conception of his surroundings. Plainly there was a flight of steps ascending from his own level to that of this illuminated doorway; and indeed he thought he could make out another thread of light, as fine as a needle, and as faint as phosphorescence, which might very well be reflected along the polished wood of a handrail. Since he had begun to suspect that h

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

not alone, his heart had continued to beat with smother-violence, and an intolerable desire for action of any sort possessed itself of his spirit. He was in deadly peril, relieved. What could be more natural than to mount the case, lift the curtain, and confront his difficulty at once? At least he would be dealing with something tangible; at least he would be no longer in the dark. He stepped slowly forward with outstretched hands, until his foot struck the bottom step; then he rapidly scaled the stairs,¹³ stood for a moment to compose his expression, lifted the arras and went

He found himself in a large apartment of polished stone.¹⁴ There were three doors; one on each of three sides; all similarly adorned with tapestry. The fourth side was occupied by two windows and a great stone chimney-piece, carved with the arms of the Malétroits. Denis recognized the bearings, and was gratified to find himself in such good hands. The room was strongly illuminated; but it contained little furniture except a heavy table and a chair or two, the hearth was devoid of fire, and the pavement was but sparsely strewn with rushes clearly many days old.

At a high chair beside the chimney, and directly facing Denis as he entered, sat a little old gentleman¹⁵ in a fur tippet. He sat with his legs crossed and his hands folded, and a cup of red wine stood by his elbow on a bracket on the wall. His countenance had a strongly masculine cast; not properly manly, but such as we see in the bull, the goat, or the domestic boar; something equivocal and wheedling, something sly, brutal, and dangerous. The upper lip was inordinately full; as though swollen by a blow or a toothache; and the smile, the peaked eyebrows, and the small, strong eyes were quaintly and almost comically evil in expression. Beau-white hair hung straight all round his head, like a saint's, and fell in a single curl upon the tippet. His beard and mustache were the pink of venerable sweetness. Age, probably in consequence of inordinate precautions, had left no mark upon his hands; and the Malétroit hand was famous. It would

be difficult to imagine anything at once so fleshy and so delicate in design; the taper, sensual fingers were like those of one of Leonardo's women; the fork of the thumb made a dimpled protuberance when closed; the nails were perfectly shaped and of a dead, surprising whiteness. It rendered his aspect tenfold more redoubtable, that a man with hands like these should keep them devoutly folded like a virgin martyr—that a man with so intent and startling an expression of face should sit patiently on his seat and contemplate people with an unwinking stare, like a god, or a god's statue. His quiescence seemed ironical and treacherous, it fitted so poorly with his looks.

Such was Alain, Sire de Malétroit.

Denis and he looked silently at each other for a second or two.

"Pray step in," said the Sire de Malétroit. "I have been expecting you¹⁶ all the evening."

He had not risen, but he accompanied his words with a smile and a slight but courteous inclination of the head. Partly from the smile, partly from the strange musical murmur with which the Sire prefaced his observation, Denis felt a strong shudder of disgust go through his marrow. And what with disgust and honest confusion of mind, he could scarcely get words together in reply.

"I fear," he said, "that this is a double accident. I am not the person you suppose me. It seems you were looking for a visit; but for my part, nothing was further from my thoughts—nothing could be more contrary to my wishes—than this intrusion."

"Well, well," replied the old gentleman indulgently, "here you are, which is the main point. Seat yourself, my friend and put yourself entirely at your ease. We shall arrange our little affairs presently."

Denis perceived that the matter was still complicated with some misconception, and he hastened to continue his explanations.

"Your door . . ." he began.

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

"About my door?" asked the other, raising his peaked eyebrows. "A little piece of ingenuity." And he shrugged his shoulders. "A hospitable fancy! By your own account, you were not desirous of making my acquaintance. We old people look for such reluctance now and then; when it touches our honor, we cast about until we find some way of overcoming it. You arrive uninvited, but believe me, very welcome."

"You persist in error, sir," said Denis. "There can be no question between you and me. I am a stranger in this country-side. My name is Denis, damoiseau de Beaulieu. If you see me in your house, it is only——"

"My young friend," interrupted the other, "you will permit me to have my own ideas on that subject. They probably differ from yours at the present moment," he added with a leer, "but time will show which of us is in the right."

Denis was convinced he had to do with a lunatic. He seated himself with a shrug, content to wait the upshot; and a pause ensued, during which he thought he could distinguish a hurried gabbling as of prayer from behind the arras¹⁷ immediately opposite him. Sometimes there seemed to be but one person engaged, sometimes two; and the vehemence of the voice, low as it was, seemed to indicate either great haste or an agony of spirit. It occurred to him that this piece of tapestry covered the entrance to the chapel he had noticed from without.

The old gentleman meanwhile surveyed Denis from head to foot with a smile, and from time to time emitted little noises like a bird or a mouse, which seemed to indicate a high degree of satisfaction. This state of matters became rapidly insupportable; and Denis, to put an end to it, remarked politely that the wind had gone down.

The old gentleman fell into a fit of silent laughter, so prolonged and violent that he became quite red in the face. Denis got upon his feet at once, and put on his hat with a flourish.

"Sir," he said, "if you are in your wits, you have affronted me grossly. If you are out of them, I flatter myself I can find

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

better employment for my brains than to talk with lunatics. My conscience is clear; you have made a fool of me from the first moment; you have refused to hear my explanations; and now there is no power under God will make me stay here any longer; and if I cannot make my way out in a more decent fashion, I will hack your door in pieces with my sword."

The Sire de Malétroit raised his right hand and wagged it at Denis with the fore and little fingers extended.

"My dear nephew,"¹⁸ he said, "sit down."

"Nephew!" retorted Denis, "you lie in your throat;" and he snapped his fingers in his face.

"Sit down, you rogue!" cried the old gentleman, in a sudden, harsh voice, like the barking of a dog. "Do you fancy," he went on, "that when I had made my little contrivance for the door I had stopped short with that? If you prefer to be bound hand and foot till your bones ache, rise and try to go away. If you choose to remain a free young buck, agreeably conversing with an old gentleman—why, sit where you are in peace, and God be with you."

"Do you mean I am a prisoner?" demanded Denis.

"I state the facts," replied the other. "I would rather leave the conclusion to yourself."

Denis sat down again. Externally he managed to keep pretty calm, but within, he was now boiling with anger, now chilled with apprehension. He no longer felt convinced that he was dealing with a madman. And if the old gentleman was sane, what, in God's name, had he to look for? What absurd or tragical adventure¹⁹ had befallen him? What countenance was he to assume?

While he was thus unpleasantly reflecting, the arras that overhung the chapel door was raised, and a tall priest in his robes came forth and, giving a long, keen stare at Denis, said something in an undertone to Sire de Malétroit.

"She²⁰ is in a better frame of spirit?" asked the latter.

"She is more resigned, messire," replied the priest.

"Now the Lord help her, she is hard to please!" sneered

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

the old gentleman. "A likely stripling—not ill-born—and of her own choosing, too? Why, what more would the jade have?"

"The situation is not usual for a young damsel," said the other, "and somewhat trying to her blushes."

"She should have thought of that before she began the dance. It was none of my choosing, God knows that: but since she is in it, by our lady, she shall carry it to the end." And then addressing Denis, "Monsieur de Beaulieu," he asked, "may I present you to my niece? She has been awaiting your arrival, I may say, with even greater impatience than myself."

Denis had resigned himself with a good grace—all he desired was to know the worst of it as speedily as possible; so he rose at once, and bowed in acquiescence. The Sire de Malétroit followed his example and limped, with the assistance of the chaplain's arm, towards the chapel-door.²¹ The priest pulled aside the arras, and all three entered. The building had considerable architectural pretensions. A light groining sprang from six stout columns, and hung down in two rich pendants from the center of the vault. The place terminated behind the altar in a round end, embossed and honeycombed with a superfluity of ornament in relief, and pierced by many little windows shaped like stars, trefoils, or wheels. These windows were imperfectly glazed, so that the night air circulated freely in the chapel. The tapers, of which there must have been half a hundred burning on the altar, were unmercifully blown about; and the light went through many different phases of brilliancy and semi-eclipse. On the steps in front of the altar knelt a young girl richly attired as a bride.²² A chill settled over Denis as he observed her costume; he fought with desperate energy against the conclusion that was being thrust upon his mind; it could not—it should not—be as he feared.

"Blanche," said the Sire, in his most flute-like tones, "I have brought a friend to see you, my little girl; turn round and give him your pretty hand. It is good to be devout; but it is necessary to be polite, my niece."

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

The girl rose to her feet and turned toward the new-comers. She moved all of a piece; and shame and exhaustion were expressed in every line of her fresh young body; and she held her head down and kept her eyes upon the pavement, as she came slowly forward. In the course of her advance, her eyes fell upon Denis de Beaulieu's feet—feet of which he was justly vain, be it remarked, and wore in the most elegant accouterment even while traveling. She paused—started, as if his yellow boots had conveyed some shocking meaning—and glanced suddenly up into the wearer's countenance. Their eyes met; shame gave place to horror and terror in her looks; the blood left her lips; with a piercing scream she covered her face with her hands and sank upon the chapel floor.

"That is not the man!" she cried. "My uncle, that is not the man!"²³

The Sire de Malétoit chirped agreeably. "Of course not," he said, "I expected as much."²⁴ It was so unfortunate you could not remember his name."

"Indeed," she cried, "indeed, I have never seen this person till this moment—I have never so much as set eyes upon him—I never wish to see him again. Sir," she said, turning to Denis, "if you are a gentleman, you will bear me out. Have I ever seen you—have you ever seen me—before this accursed hour?"

"To speak for myself, I have never had that pleasure," answered the young man. "This is the first time, messire, that I have met with your engaging niece."

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

"I am distressed to hear it," he said. "But it is never too late to begin. I had little more acquaintance with my own late lady ere I married her; which proves," he added, with a grimace, "that these impromptu marriages may often produce an excellent understanding in the long run. As the bridegroom is to have a voice in the matter, I will give him two hours to make up for lost time before we proceed with the ceremony."²⁵ And he turned toward the door, followed by the clergyman.

The girl was on her feet in a moment. "My uncle, you can

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

not be in earnest," she said. "I declare before God I will stab myself rather than be forced on that young man. The heart rises at it; God forbids such marriages; you dishonor your white hair. Oh, my uncle, pity me! There is not a woman in all the world but would prefer death to such a nuptial. Is it possible," she added, faltering—"is it possible that you do not believe me—that you still think this"—and she pointed at Denis with a tremor of anger and contempt—"that you still think *this* to be the man?"

"Frankly," said the old gentleman, pausing on the threshold, "I do. But let me explain to you once for all, Blanche de Malétroit, my way of thinking about this affair. When you took it into your head to dishonor my family and the name that I have borne, in peace and war, for more than three-score years, you forfeited not only the right to question my designs, but that of looking me in the face. If your father had been alive, he would have spat on you and turned you out of doors. His was the hand of iron. You may bless your God you have only to deal with the hand of velvet, mademoiselle. It was my duty to get you married without delay. Out of pure good-will, I have tried to find your own gallant²⁶ for you. And I believe I have succeeded. But before God and all the holy angels, Blanche de Malétroit, if I have not, I care not one jack-straw. So let me recommend you to be polite to our young friend; for upon my word, your next groom may be less appetizing."

And with that he went out,²⁷ with the chaplain at his heels; and the arras fell behind the pair.

The girl turned upon Denis with flashing eyes.

"And what, sir," she demanded, "may be the meaning of all this?"²⁸

"God knows," returned Denis, gloomily. "I am a prisoner in this house, which seems full of mad people. More I know not; and nothing do I understand."

"And pray how came you here?" she asked.

He told her as briefly as he could. "For the rest," he added, "perhaps you will follow my example, and tell me

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

the answer to all these riddles, and what, in God's name, is like to be the end of it."

She stood silent for a little, and he could see her lips tremble and her tearless eyes burn with a feverish luster. Then she pressed her forehead in both hands.

"Alas, how my head aches!" she said wearily—"to say nothing of my poor heart! But it is due to you to know my story,²⁹ unmaidenly as it must seem. I am called Blanche de Malétroit; I have been without father or mother for—oh! for as long as I can recollect, and indeed I have been most unhappy all my life. Three months ago a young captain began to stand near me every day in church. I could see that I pleased him; I am much to blame, but I was so glad that anyone should love me; and when he passed me a letter, I took it home with me and read it with great pleasure. Since that time he has written many. He was so anxious to speak with me, poor fellow! and kept asking me to leave the door open some evening that we might have two words upon the stair. For he knew how much my uncle trusted me." She gave something like a sob at that, and it was a moment before she could go on. "My uncle is a hard man, but he is very shrewd," she said at last. "He has performed many feats in war, and was a great person at court, and much trusted by Queen Isabeau in old days. How he came to suspect me I cannot tell; but it is hard to keep anything from his knowledge; and this morning, as we came from mass, he took my hand into his, forced it open, and read my little billet, walking by my side all the while.³⁰ When he finished, he gave it back to me with great politeness. It contained another request to have the door left open; and this has been the ruin of us all. My uncle kept me strictly in my room until evening, and then ordered me to dress myself as you see me—a hard mockery for a young girl, do you not think so? I suppose, when he could not prevail with me to tell him the young captain's name, he must have laid a trap for him: into which, alas! you have fallen in the anger of God. I looked for much confusion; for how could I tell whether he was willing to take me

for his wife on these sharp terms? He might have been trifling with me from the first; or I might have made myself too cheap in his eyes. But truly I had not looked for such shameful punishment as this! I could not think that God would let a girl be so disgraced before a young man. And now I tell you all; I can scarcely hope that you will not despise me."

Denis made her a respectful inclination.

"Madam," he said, "you have honored me by your confidence. It remains for me to prove that I am not unworthy of the honor. Is Messire de Malétroit at hand?"

"I believe he is writing in the *salle* without," she answered.

"May I lead you thither, madam?" asked Denis, offering his hand with his most courtly bearing.

She accepted it; and the pair passed out³¹ of the chapel, Blanche in a very drooping and shamefast condition, but Denis strutting and ruffling in the consciousness of a mission, and the boyish certainty of accomplishing it with honor.

The Sire de Malétroit rose to meet them with an ironical obeisance.

"Sir," said Denis, with the grandest possible air, "I believe I am to have some say in the matter of this marriage; and let me tell you at once, I will be no party to forcing the inclination of this young lady. Had it been freely offered to me, I should have been proud to accept her hand, for I perceive she is as good as she is beautiful; but as things are, I have now the honor, messire, of refusing."

Blanche looked at him with gratitude in her eyes; but the old gentleman only smiled and smiled, until his smile grew positively sickening³² to Denis.

"I am afraid," he said, "Monsieur de Beaulieu, that you do not perfectly understand the choice I have offered you. Follow me, I beseech you, to this window." And he led the way to one of the large windows which stood open on the night. "You observe," he went on, "there is an iron ring in the upper masonry, and reeved through that, a very efficacious rope.³³ Now mark my words: if you should find your disinclination to

my niece's person insurmountable, I shall have you hanged out of this window before sunrise. I shall only proceed to such an extremity with the greatest regret, you may believe me. For it is not at all your death that I desire, but my niece's establishment in life. At the same time, it must come to that if you prove obstinate. Your family, Monsieur de Beaulieu, is very well in its way; but if you sprang from Charlemagne, you should not refuse the hand of a Malétroit with impunity—not if she had been as common as the Paris road—not if she were as hideous as the gargoyle over my door. Neither my niece nor you, nor my own private feelings,³⁴ move me at all in this matter. The honor of my house has been compromised; I believe you to be the guilty person, at least you are now in the secret; and you can hardly wonder if I request you to wipe out the stain. If you will not, your blood be on your own head! It will be no great satisfaction to me to have your interesting relics kicking their heels in the breeze below my windows, but half a loaf is better than no bread, and if I cannot cure the dishonor, I shall at least stop the scandal."

There was a pause.

"I believe there are other ways of settling such imbroglios among gentlemen," said Denis. "You wear a sword, and I hear you have used it with distinction."

The Sire de Malétroit made a signal to the chaplain, who crossed the room with long silent strides and raised the arras over the third of the three doors. It was only a moment before he let it fall again; but Denis had time to see a dusky passage full of armed men.³⁵

"When I was a little younger, I should have been delighted to honor you, Monsieur de Beaulieu," said Sire Alain; "but I am now too old. Faithful retainers are the sinews of age, and I must employ the strength I have. This is one of the hardest things to swallow as a man grows up in years; but with a little patience, even this becomes habitual. You and the lady seem to prefer the *salle* for what remains of your two hours; and as I have no desire to cross your preference, I

shall resign it to your use with all the pleasure in the world. No haste!" he added, holding up his hand, as he saw a dangerous look come into Denis de Beaulieu's face. "If your mind revolt against hanging, it will be time enough two hours hence to throw yourself out of the window or upon the pikes of my retainers. Two hours of life are always two hours. A great many things may turn up in even as little a while as that. And, besides, if I understand her appearance, my niece has something to say to you. You will not disfigure your last hours by a want of politeness to a lady?"

Denis looked at Blanche, and she made him an imploring gesture.

It is likely that the old gentleman was hugely pleased at this symptom of an understanding; for he smiled on both, and added sweetly: "If you will give me your word of honor, Monsieur de Beaulieu, to await my return at the end of the two hours before attempting anything desperate, I shall withdraw my retainers, and let you speak in greater privacy with mademoiselle."

Denis again glanced at the girl, who seemed to beseech him to agree.

"I give you my word of honor," he said.

Messire de Malétroit bowed, and proceeded to limp about the apartment, clearing his throat the while with that odd musical chirp which had already grown so irritating in the ears of Denis de Beaulieu. He first possessed himself of some papers which lay upon the table; then he went to the mouth of the passage and appeared to give an order to the men behind the arras; and lastly he hobbled out through the door by which Denis had come in, turning upon the threshold to address a last smiling bow to the young couple, and followed by the chaplain with a hand-lamp.³⁶

No sooner were they alone than Blanche advanced towards Denis with her hands extended. Her face was flushed and excited, and her eyes shone with tears.

"You shall not die!" she cried, "you shall marry me after all."

"You seem to think, madam," replied Denis, "that I stand much in fear of death."

"Oh, no, no," she said, "I see you are no poltroon. It is for my own sake—I could not bear to have you slain for such a scruple."

"I am afraid," returned Denis, "that you underrate the difficulty, madam. What you may be too generous to refuse, I may be too proud to accept.³⁷ In a moment of noble feeling towards me, you forgot what you perhaps owe to others."

He had the decency to keep his eyes on the floor as he said this, and after he had finished, so as not to spy upon her confusion. She stood silent for a moment, then walked suddenly away, and falling on her uncle's chair, fairly burst out sobbing. Denis was in the acme of embarrassment. He looked round, as if to seek for inspiration, and seeing a stool, plumped down upon it for something to do. There he sat playing with the guard of his rapier, and wishing himself dead a thousand times over, and buried in the nastiest kitchen-heap in France. His eyes wandered round the apartment, but found nothing to arrest them. There were such wide spaces between the furniture, the light fell so badly and cheerlessly over all, the dark outside air looked in so coldly through the windows that he thought he had never seen a church so vast, nor a tomb so melancholy. The regular sobs of Blanche de Malétroit measured out the time like the ticking of a clock. He read the device upon the shield over and over again, until his eyes became obscured; he stared into shadowy corners until he imagined they were swarming with horrible animals; and every now and again he awoke with a start, to remember that his last two hours were running, and death was on the march.³⁸

Oftener and oftener, as the time went on, did his glance settle on the girl herself. Her face was bowed forward and covered with her hands, and she was shaken at intervals by the convulsive hiccup of grief. Even thus she was not an unpleasant object to dwell upon, so plump and yet so fine, with a warm brown skin, and the most beautiful hair, Denis thought, in the whole world of womankind. Her hands were like her

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

uncle's; but they were more in place at the end of her young arms, and looked infinitely soft and caressing. He remembered how her blue eyes had shone upon him, full of anger, pity, and innocence. And the more he dwelt on her perfections, the uglier death looked, and the more deeply was he smitten with penitence at her continued tears. Now he felt that no man could have the courage to leave a world which contained so beautiful a creature; and now he would have given forty minutes of his last hour to have unsaid his cruel speech.

Suddenly a hoarse and ragged peal of cockerow³⁹ rose to their ears from the dark valley below the windows. And this shattering noise in the silence of all around was like a light in a dark place, and shook them both out of their reflections.

"Alas, can I do nothing to help you?" she said, looking up.

"Madam," replied Denis, with a fine irrelevancy, "if I have said anything to wound you, believe me it was for your own sake and not for mine."

She thanked him with a tearful look.

"I feel your position cruelly," he went on. "The world has been bitter hard on you. Your uncle is a disgrace to mankind. Believe me, madam, there is no young gentleman in all France but would be glad of my opportunity, to die in doing you a momentary service."

"I know already that you can be very brave and generous," she answered. "What I *want* to know is whether I can serve you—now or afterwards," she added, with a quaver.

"Most certainly," he answered with a smile. "Let me sit beside you as if I were a friend, instead of a foolish intruder; try to forget how awkwardly we are placed to one another; make my last moments go pleasantly; and you will do me the chief service possible."

"You are very gallant," she added, with a yet deeper sadness . . . "very gallant . . . and it somehow pains me. But draw nearer, if you please; and if you find anything to say to me, you will at least make certain of a very friendly listener. Ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu," she broke forth—"ah! Monsieur

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

de Beaulieu, how can I look you in the face?" And she fell to weeping again ⁴⁰ with a renewed effusion.

"Madam," said Denis, taking her hand in both of his, "reflect on the little time I have before me, and the great bitterness into which I am cast by the sight of your distress. Spare me, in my last moments, the spectacle of what I cannot cure even with the sacrifice of my life."

"I am very selfish," answered Blanche. "I will be braver, Monsieur de Beaulieu, for your sake. But think if I can do you no kindness in the future—if you have no friends to whom I could carry your adieux. Charge me as heavily as you can; every burden will lighten, by so little, the invaluable gratitude I owe you. Put it in my power to do something more for you than weep."

"My mother is married again, and has a young family to care for. My brother Guichard will inherit my fiefs; and if I am not in error, that will content him amply for my death. Life is a little vapor that passeth away, as we are told by those in holy orders. When a man is in a fair way and sees all life open in front of him, he seems to himself to make a very important figure in the world. His horse whinnies to him; the trumpets blow and the girls look out of windows as he rides into town before his company; he receives many assurances of trust and regard—sometimes by express in a letter—sometimes face to face, with persons of great consequence falling on his neck. It is not wonderful if his head is turned for a time. But once he is dead, were he as brave as Hercules or as wise as Solomon, he is soon forgotten. It is not ten years since my father fell, with many other knights around him, in a very fierce encounter, and I do not think that any one of them, nor so much as the name of the fight, is now remembered. No, no, madam, the nearer you come to it, you see that death is a dark and dusty corner, where a man gets into his tomb and has the door shut after him till the Judgment Day. I have few friends just now, and once I am dead I shall have none."

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

"Ah, Monsieur de Beaulieu!" she exclaimed, "you forget Blanche de Malétroit."

"You have a sweet nature, madam, and you are pleased to estimate a little service far beyond its worth."

"It is not that," she answered. "You mistake me if you think I am easily touched by my own concerns. I say so, because you are the noblest man I have ever met; because I recognize in you a spirit that would have made even a common person famous in the land."

"And yet here I die in a mousetrap—with no more noise about it than my own squeaking," answered he.

A look of pain crossed her face, and she was silent for a little while. Then a light came into her eyes, and with a smile she spoke again.

"I cannot have my champion think meanly of himself. Anyone who gives his life for another will be met in Paradise by all the heralds and angels of the Lord God. And you have no such cause to hang your head. For . . . pray, do you think me beautiful?" she asked, with a deep flush.

"Indeed, madam, I do," he said.

"I am glad of that," she answered heartily. "Do you think there are many men in France who have been asked in marriage by a beautiful maiden—with her own lips—and who have refused her to her face? I know you men would half despise such a triumph; but believe me, we women know more of what is precious in love. There is nothing that should set a person higher in his own esteem; and we women would prize nothing more dearly."

"You are very good," he said; "but you cannot make me forget that I was asked in pity and not for love."

"I am not so sure of that," she replied, holding down her head. "Hear me to an end, Monsieur de Beaulieu. I know how you must despise me; I feel you are right to do so; I am too poor a creature to occupy one thought of your mind, although, alas! you must die for me this morning. But when I asked you to marry me, indeed, and indeed, it was because I respected and admired you, and loved you with my whole soul,

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

from the very moment that you took my part against uncle.⁴¹ If you had seen yourself, and how noble looked, you would pity rather than despise me. And now she went on, hurriedly checking him with her hand, "although I have laid aside all reserve and told you so much, remember that I know your sentiments towards me already. I would not, believe me, being nobly born, weary you with importunities into consent. I too have a pride of my own: and I declare before the holy mother of God, if you should go back from your word already given, I would no more marry you than I would marry my uncle's groom."

Denis smiled a little bitterly.

"It is a small love," he said, "that shies at a little pride."

She made no answer, although she probably had her own thoughts.

"Come hither to the window," he said with a sigh. "The dawn is the dawn."⁴²

And indeed the dawn was already beginning. The horizon of the sky was full of essential daylight, colorless and clear, and the valley underneath was flooded with a gray reflection. A few thin vapors clung in the coves of the forest or along the winding course of the river. The scene disengaged a surprising effect of stillness, which was hardly interrupted when the cocks began once more to crow among the steady roofs. Perhaps the same fellow who had made so horrid a clangor in the darkness not half an hour before, now sent up the merriest cheer to greet the coming day. A little wind went bustling and eddying among the tree-tops underneath the windows. Still the daylight kept flooding insensibly out of the east, and was soon to grow incandescent and cast up that red-hot cannon-ball, the rising sun.

Denis looked out over all this with a bit of a shiver. He had taken her hand, and retained it in his almost unconscious grasp.

"Has the day begun already?" she said; and then, illogically enough: "the night has been so long! Alas! what shall I say to my uncle when he returns?"

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

What you will," said Denis, and he pressed her fingers in

he was silent.

blanche," he said, with a swift, uncertain, passionate utterance, "you have seen whether I fear death. You must know enough that I would as gladly leap out of that window into the empty air as to lay a finger on you without your free and full consent. But if you care for me at all, do not let me lose my life in a misapprehension; for I love you better than the whole world;⁴³ and though I will die for you blithely, I would be like all the joys of Paradise to live on and spend my life in your service."

When he stopped speaking,⁴⁴ a bell began to ring loudly in the interior of the house; and a clatter of armor in the corridor indicated that the retainers were returning to their post, and the hours were at an end.

"After all that you have heard?" she whispered, leaning towards him with her lips and eyes.

"I have heard nothing," he replied.

"The captain's name was Florimond de Champdivers," she said in his ear.

"I did not hear it," he answered, taking her supple body in his arms, and covering her wet face with kisses.

A melodious chirping was audible behind, followed by a joyful chuckle, and the voice of Messire de Malétroit wished his new nephew ⁴⁵ a good-morning.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson was born at Edinburgh, on the thirteenth of November, 1850.* He was a delicate boy troubled by an exhausting cough, and but for the watchful care of his nurse, Alison Cunningham, might not have survived. "Cummie," as he called her, came when he was a year and a half old; she watched over him physically, read and sang to him, taught him the Shorter Catechism, and prayed with him. In after years, Stevenson used to say that he was grateful for having had a Covenanting childhood, and he repaid Cummie's devotion by dedicating to her his "Child's Garden of Verses." His father and his mother were indulgent to him, their only child, and allowed him to follow largely his own inclination.

When he was six years of age he took a prize from his Uncle David, who offered it to that one of his nephews and nieces who could produce the best history of Moses. After his initial success, Robert Louis desired to be a writer. Like most children he was fond of having someone read aloud to him. On a particular stormy day his mother chose Macbeth. Never afterward did he read the tragedy without hearing the gallop "howling up the valley of the Leith."

His preliminary education, which was desultory, began in 1859 with a preparatory school in Edinburgh; later, he went to the Edinburgh Academy, then for a term to an English boarding school. Latin, French and Mathematics formed the staple of his education. In English spelling he never became proficient; as his biographer Mr. Graham Balfour says, it was dark, even to the last. It is significant that his instructor found it more pleasant to talk to him than to teach him.

But if his education was intermittent, he profited by the

* In 1873 he began to sign himself Robert Louis Stevenson, having dropped the third and changed his second name to Louis,—but pronounced as Lewis,—somewhat earlier.



ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

breaks. Before he was thirteen years of age he had visited the English Lakes, the Isle of Wight, Mentone, Rome, Venice, and other Italian cities. He accompanied his father, Thomas Stevenson, builder of lighthouses, on an inspection tour in Fife; two springs he spent in Torquay, a coast town in Devon.

When he finally went to the University of Edinburgh, he worked for a degree in Science, as his father hoped he, too, would build lighthouses. But he took his work in the University in much the same spirit as he had taken his preparatory training, acting, as he himself said, "on an extensive and highly rational system of truancy." Moreover, he continued to profit by the advantages of travel and observation, and to store up memories, on which he drew later. In 1869 he went with his father to Shetland; in 1870 he spent some weeks in Earraid, a little island off Mull,—the Earraid which appears later in "Memories and Portraits" and "David Balfour." For some years the family had been spending part of the summers in a cottage at the foot of the Pentland Hills; this cottage became the home of the heroine of "St. Ives."

In April, 1871, Robert Louis informed his father that he wished to devote himself to literature. With wonderful resignation Thomas Stevenson gave his consent, but stipulated that the boy must have some profession in the event he failed as author. So it was that Stevenson read law, and (1875) on passing his finals was called to the Scottish Bar. But his heart was not in that work, and there is small cause for surprise that his practice was brief. Meantime, he was making friends,—Stevenson had a mania for friends,—Lady Sitwell, Sir Sidney Colvin, Fleeming Jenkin; and he was extending his knowledge of literature. The New Testament, Herbert Spencer, Walt Whitman, Dumas, Shakespeare, Montaigne and others were among those he "took to." In addition, he was learning his trade, much as De Maupassant, the young man across the channel, was learning to write. He carried with him always two books, one in which to read, the other in which to jot down his thoughts. "I lived with words," he said. He formed his style, consciously, and is a notable

example of what may be achieved by perseverance and imitation of classic authors. He believed that the way to learn to write is by "playing the sedulous ape," and he served in order Hazlitt, Lamb, Wordsworth, Sir Thomas Browne, Daniel Defoe, and others.

In 1873 his first article (on Roads) was published, and this year he was made fairly independent by an allowance from his father. His propensity to travel thus finding encouragement, and his weak chest subjecting him to frequent orders for change, it is but natural that he increased his acquaintance with Scotland and England and continental Europe. In 1876 he made a walking trip into Garrick and Galloway, and slept a night at Ballantrae. It was years later when walking up and down the porch of his cottage in the Adirondacks that his mind went back to that night and there came to him the story of "The Master of Ballantrae," the greatest of his completed tragedies. Later in the same year (1876) he made with a friend a canoe trip from Antwerp to Brussels, then by the Oise almost to the Seine—a journey reproduced in "An Inland Voyage." It is a noteworthy fact that in the years from 1871 to 1876, nine of Stevenson's papers deal with travel or with places he had visited. In France, which Stevenson loved, he spent some time at Barbizon, Grez, and Montigny. By the study of French, the one language besides his own in which he acquired proficiency, he gained clearness and neatness of expression. It will not be forgotten that at Grez he first met Mrs. Osbourne, who subsequently became his wife.

In 1878 Stevenson turned to fiction, and began "The New Arabian Nights," having had "A Lodging for the Night" accepted the year before.* The same year, 1878, he made the famous "travels with a donkey," in the Cévennes. After some time in England and France he heard that Mrs. Osbourne, who had returned with her daughter to California, was ill. In August, 1879, he set sail for America.

* "The Sire de Malétrait's Door" (one of "The New Arabian Nights" stories) was originally called "The Sire de Malétrait's Mousetrap." It was told aloud one evening in Paris, and was later written down at Penzance.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

On this his first trip to American shores, Stevenson came near death. To regain his health he spent the months until the middle of December at Monterey, and there finished "The Pavilion on the Links." * Then he lived in San Francisco—where he wrote his well-known "Requiem"—until Mrs. Osbourne and he were married. That was in 1880. After the marriage, Stevenson, his wife and her son, Lloyd Osbourne, went to the country some miles from San Francisco. The deserted mining camp where they lived figured later (1882) as the setting of "The Silverado Squatters" in which for pure description are passages nowhere excelled.

One year after leaving for America, Stevenson, now accompanied by his wife, returned to England. His father had already settled upon him about a thousand dollars a year, and, delighted with his choice of a companion, now gave him further financial help, and watched with pride his career. The rest of his life is a tale of his quest for health, of affection in his home, and of success in his work.

In 1881 he wrote "Treasure Island," which was then published as a serial, and two years later in book form. On its appearance in 1884, hailed as the work of a new genius, it marked his first popular success. In 1881, also, he turned his attention to verses for children. In the early 'eighties the Stevensons were in Davos and Edinburgh and Paris. Then ordered South, they spent some months at Marseilles and Hyères; at Nice there was an attack which came near ending the writer's life. In July, they were back in England.

There now followed three years at Bournemouth, in the house which they named "Skerryvore," after one of the Stevenson lighthouses. Here John S. Sargent came to paint the author's picture; here among other friends came William Archer and Henry James. In these years, Stevenson wrote "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," "Kidnapped" and "Prince Otto." In 1887, shortly after the death of his father, he suffered another severe

* Regarded by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as an ideal short-story.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

attack. It was decided that the family should leave England for America. After some time in and near New York, they spent the winter at Saranac Lake, where Stevenson was under the care of Dr. Trudeau. In the spring, he loitered in New Jersey and the city while his wife went on to San Francisco to search for a yacht in which they might make a trip to the South Seas. When she wrote that the *Casco* could be hired, he joined her and after some preparation their party set sail.

For nearly three years they wandered over the Pacific, stopping at the Hawaiian Islands, at Tahiti and Samoa and the Gilberts. At Waikiki, some miles from Honolulu, Stevenson finished "The Master of Ballantrae," which was running as a serial in *Scribner's*. His visit to Molokai, the leper colony, is commemorated in his article on Father Damien. The boat, *The Equator*, on which they left Honolulu landed at Apia, the capital of Opolu, in December, 1899. There Stevenson eventually settled down and there he became known as Tusitala, the teller of tales. In February, 1890, he went over to Sydney, Australia, but became ill and soon set out on a trip among the islands. Once more he journeyed to Australia, this time to meet his mother, and again he fell sick. In April, 1890, however, the family (consisting of himself, his wife, his mother and his wife's daughter and grandchild) was at home in Vailima. The "Vailima Letters" fully tell of this period, the last, of Stevenson's life. Here he made friends among the natives and among the American colonists and officials. Here he finished a number of his works and here he left unfinished what might have been the best of all,—"*Weir of Hermiston.*" After a dinner given to his American friends on the twenty-ninth of November, 1894, he suffered a stroke from which he did not rally. He died on the third of December, just past his forty-fourth birthday.

His grave is in Samoa on the top of a knoll at a spot which he himself had selected, and carved on his tomb is the requiem he had written years before:

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie;
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
*Here he lies where he longed to be,
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.*

Other stories wherein a person is trapped or imprisoned:

The Pit and the Pendulum," by Edgar Allan Poe.

In the Library," by W. W. Jacobs (In "The Lady of the Barge").

The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney," by Rudyard Kipling (In "Life's Handicap").

The Remarkable Wreck of the Thomas Hyke," by Frank R. Stockton (In "The Christmas Wreck").

A Struggle for Life," by Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

Other stories by Stevenson:

Thrawn Janet," * "Markheim," "The Merry Men," "Will o' the Mill," "Olalla" (In "The Merry Men").

A Lodging for the Night," "The Pavilion on the Links" (In "New Arabian Nights").

* Regarded by the author as one of the best of his stories.

THE NECKLACE *

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

She was one of those pretty and charming girls, born and brought up if by mischance, in a family of employees. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved by a rich and distinguished man; and she let herself be married to a clerk at the Ministry of Public Education.¹

She dressed simply because she could not afford to adorn herself; but she was as unhappy as if she had fallen from a high estate; for women have neither cast nor station; their beauty, grace and charm serve for family and noble birth. In innate fineness, instinct for beauty, and versatility, their only hierarchy, make women of the lower class equal to the grandest ladies.²

She suffered ceaselessly, feeling herself born for delicacies and luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the miserable walls, the shabby chairs, the ugly furnishings. All these things, of which another woman of her class would not even have been sensible, tortured and angered her. The sight of the little Breton maid, her only servant, aroused in her gloomy regrets and distracted thoughts. She dreamed of silent antechambers draped with Oriental hangings, lighted by tall bronze lamps, and of two imposing footmen in knee breeches who drowsed in big arm chairs lulled asleep by the heavy warmth of the stove. She thought of grand drawing rooms hung in antique silk, of elegant furniture holding priceless trinkets, and of little perfumed coquettish parlors, made for talks at five o'clock with particularly intimate friends, men celebrated and sought after, whom all women envy and whose attention they wish.

When she sat down for dinner⁴ at a round table covered with a cloth three days old, opposite her husband who un-

* Translated by the editor.

PROPERTY OF
HALL

covered the soup bowl exclaiming blissfully: "Ah! the good beef stew! I don't know anything better than that!" . . . she thought of dainty dinners, of shining silver plate, of tapestries that peopled the walls with ancient personages and strange birds in the midst of a fairy forest; she thought of exquisite dishes served on marvellous platters, of whispered gallantries which one heard with the smile of a sphinx while she ate the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no gowns, no jewels, nothing. And she loved that sort of thing only; she felt that she was made for that alone. She would have liked so much to please, to be envied, to be attractive and sought after. She had a rich friend,⁵ a companion of convent days, whom she did not wish any more to visit, because she suffered so on returning home. And she wept whole days from chagrin, regret, and despair.⁶

Then one day⁷ her husband came in with a proud look, holding in his hand a large envelope.

"There," said he, "there is something for you!"

She quickly tore the paper, and drew out an engraved card which bore these words:

"The Minister of Public Education and Madame George Ramponneau beg M. and Mme. Loisel to do them the honor of passing the evening at the palace of the Ministry, on Monday, January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she angrily threw the invitation on the table, murmuring:

"What do you wish me to do with that?"

"Why, my dear, I thought you would be happy! You never go out; and it is an occasion, this, a big affair! I had a lot of trouble to get it. Everybody wants one; it is very exclusive, and not many invitations are given to employees. You will see all the official world there."

She looked at him with irritation, and spoke impatiently:

"What do you expect me to put on my back?"

He had not thought; he faltered:

"Why, the dress you wear to the theater. It seems good enough, to me . . ."

He trailed off, dismayed, as he saw that his wife was weeping.

Two big tears fell slowly from the corners of her eyes to the corners of her mouth.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?" he stammered.

But by a violent effort she had conquered her grief, and she responded in a calm voice, as she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no gown, and consequently I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife will be better equipped than I."

He was grieved.

"Let us see, Mathilde," he replied. "How much would a suitable costume cost, one which would do also for other occasions, something quite simple?"

She reflected some seconds, calculating, and considering also the sum she could ask for without drawing an immediate refusal and a terrified exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally, she answered hesitantly:

"I don't know precisely; but I think I could do it with four hundred francs."

He turned a bit pale; for he was saving just that sum with which to buy a gun and treat himself to some hunting the following summer on the plain of Nanterre, with friends who went down there of Sundays to shoot larks.

But he said:

"Very well. I'll give you four hundred francs. And try to get a pretty gown."⁸

The day of the ball drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her gown was ready, however.

One evening⁹ her husband said to her: "What's the matter? Do you know you've been very funny for three days?"

✓And she answered: "It annoys me not to have one jewel, a single stone to wear. I shall make a miserable appearance. I'd almost rather not go to this party."

"Wear some flowers," he replied. "It's quite the thing this

PROPERTY OF
MUSEUM OF
ART

THE NECKLACE

season. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No, there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among rich women."

Then her husband exclaimed:

"How stupid you are! Find your friend¹⁰ Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her well enough to do so."

"It is true!" she exclaimed joyfully, "I had not thought of that."

The next morning,¹¹ she went to see her friend and told her trouble.

Madame Forestier opened the mirror door¹² of her wardrobe, took down a large jewel case, brought it, opened it, and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

She saw first some bracelets, then a collar of pearls, then a Venetian cross, gold and precious stones, of admirable workmanship. She tried on the things before the mirror, and hesitated, unable to part with them or to return them.

"Haven't you anything else?" she kept asking.

"O, yes. Look. I don't know what will please you."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb necklace of diamonds; and her heart began to beat with extreme desire. She took it up with trembling hands. She put it around her throat, over her high-necked dress, and looked at herself in ecstasy.

Then she asked, hesitatingly, full of painful doubt:

"Can you lend me this? only this?"

"Why, yes, certainly."

She fell upon the neck of her friend, embraced her passionately, then fled with her treasure.¹³

The day of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel made a great success. She was the most beautiful of all the women; she was elegant, gracious, smiling, and drunk with joy. All the

men observed her, asked her name, begged to be presented. All the attachés of the cabinet wished to waltz with her. The Minister remarked upon her.

She danced with intoxication, with passion, made giddy by pleasure, thinking of nothing, in the triumph of her beauty in the glory of her success, in a sort of happy cloud made up of all this homage, admiration, aroused desires, of a victory sweet and complete to the heart of a woman.¹⁴

She left about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight, in a little deserted parlor, with three other men whose wives were enjoying themselves.¹⁵

He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought, the modest garments of common life, the poverty of which clashed with the elegance of the ball dress.¹⁶ She felt this, and wished to get away quickly, in order not to be noticed by the other women who were enveloping themselves in rich furs.

Loisel restrained her, as he said:

"Wait a minute. You'll catch cold outside. I'll call a cab."¹⁷

But she did not listen to him and rapidly walked down the stairway. When they were in the street, they could not find a carriage; and began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen whom they saw at a distance.

Shivering, they walked in despair toward the Seine. Finally they found on the quay one of those ancient coupés seen in Paris only after nightfall, as if they were ashamed of their wretched appearance¹⁸ during the day.

It took them to their gate in the Rue des Martyrs, and they climbed up homeward, sadly. For her, it was all over. As for him, he was thinking that he would have to be at the Ministry at ten o'clock.¹⁹

She took off her wraps²⁰ before the mirror to see herself one more time in all her glory. But suddenly she screamed out. No longer were the diamonds around her neck!

✓ "What's the trouble?" asked her husband, already half-undressed.

Excitedly she turned to him.

PROPERTY OF
MUSEUM
OF
ART
AND
LITERATURE
NEW YORK

THE NECKLACE

"I've—I've—I've lost the necklace, Madame Forestier's necklace!"

He stood up, terrified.

"What—how—impossible!"

They looked in the folds of her dress, in the plaits of the cloak, in the pockets, everywhere. They could find it nowhere.²¹

"Are you sure you still had it when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes, I touched it in the vestibule of the Ministry."

"But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall. It ought to be in the cab."

"Yes, probably. Did you take the number?"

"No. Did you notice it yourself?"

"No."

Thunderstruck, they looked at each other. Finally, Loisel dressed again.

"I'm going over the whole route on foot," said he, "to see if I can't find it."²²

And he went out. Crumpled in a chair she waited in her ball dress without strength to go to bed, without life, without a thought.

Her husband returned around seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to police headquarters, to newspapers, to offer a reward, to cab companies—everywhere the smallest hope urged him.

She waited all day, in the same state of terror before this frightful calamity.

Loisel returned in the evening with a pale and hollow visage; he had discovered nothing.

"You must write," he said, "to your friend, that you have broken the clasp of the necklace, and that you are having it repaired."²³ That will give us time to turn round."

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Loisel, who looked five years older, declared: "We must consider the replacing of the necklace."

The next morning ²⁴ they took the box which had contained it and went to the jeweler's whose name was inside. He consulted his books:

✓ "It was not I, madame, who sold the diamonds; I furnished only the jewel case."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, looking for a necklace like the lost one, consulting their memories, both of them sick from chagrin and anguish.

They found in a shop in the Palais Royale a string of diamonds which looked to them exactly like the one for which they were searching. It was worth forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six thousand.

Then they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days. And they made the stipulation that he would take it back for thirty-four thousand francs, if they found the first before the end of February.

Loisel had eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.²⁵

He borrowed, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He made notes, took ruinous terms, had to do with usurers, with all the race of lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risking his signature without even knowing if he could pay duly; and, terrified by the anguish of the future, by the black misery about to destroy him, by the prospect of all physical privations and all moral tortures, he went to get the new necklace, laying upon the counter of the merchant thirty-six thousand francs.

When Madame Loisel took back the necklace, Madame Forestier said to her coldly:

"You ought to have returned it to me sooner; I might have needed it."

She did not open the box, as her friend had so greatly feared.²⁶ If she had been aware of the substitution what would

PROPERTY OF
THE
LIBRARY OF
THE
MUSEUM OF
ART AND
ARCHITECTURE
NEW YORK

THE NECKLACE

ve thought? What would she have said? Would she
ve taken Mathilde for a thief?

ame Loisel knew the horrible life of the needy. She
e part suddenly thrust upon her, however, with heroism.
ightful debt had to be paid. She would pay it. They
ay the servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented
s in an attic.²⁷

knew the heavy work of the housekeeping, the hateful
of the kitchen. She washed the table utensils, using
sy nails upon the greasy pots and the bottom of the
ans. She washed the dirty linen, the smocks and the
owels, which she dried on a line; every morning she
ne slops down to the streets, then carried up the water,
ng at each landing to catch her breath. And dressed like
an of the people, she went, basket on arm, to the
er, the grocer, the butcher, haggling, insulted, defend-
r miserable money, sou by sou.

y month they had to pay off some notes, renew others,
more time.

husband worked in the evening, clearing up the ac-
of a merchant, and at night he often did copying at
as a page.

this life lasted ten years.²⁸

he end of ten years they had paid everything, all at
as rates and with compound interest.

ame Loisel looked old, now. She had become hard,
and rough—the woman of poor households. Her hair
pt, her skirts askew, her hands red, she talked loud,
washed the floor with great splashes of water. But
mes, when her husband was at the office, she would
n by the window, and think of that evening of long ago,
ball where she had been so beautiful and so admired.
t would have happened if she had not lost the necklace?
nows, who knows? How singular and changeful life
ow small a thing is needed to save us or lose us!²⁹
one Sunday,³⁰ when she had gone to take a walk in

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

the Champs Elysées, to refresh herself from the cares of the week, she suddenly saw a woman leading a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still so engaging.³¹

Madame Loisel felt moved. Ought she to speak? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her everything. Why not?

She stepped up:

"Good day, Jeanne."

The other did not recognize her, astonished to be addressed so familiarly by this common woman. "But Madame," she stammered, "I do not know . . . you must have made a mistake."

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry:

"O, my poor Mathilde, how changed you are!"

"Yes, I have had some hard enough days, since I saw you, and days wretched enough . . . and all because of you."

"Of me. . . . How is that?"

"You remember the diamond necklace you let me have to wear to the ball at the Ministry?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What—how—you brought it back to me."³²

"I brought you another just like it. And for ten years we have been paying for it. You must understand that it was not easy for us, who had nothing. At last it ended, and I am fairly content."

Mme. Forestier had stopped.

"You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. You were not aware of it, then? They were very much alike."

And she smiled with a joy proud and naïve.

Madame Forestier, strongly moved, took both her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, mine was paste! It was worth at most five hundred francs!"³³

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Henri-René-Albert-Guy de Maupassant was born August 5, 1850, near Dieppe. His father, Gustave de Maupassant, was of an ancient family which had been ennobled in the reign of Marie-Theresa, but which had ceased to use the title of Marquis. This Gustave was a fascinating man, somewhat weak in character but possessed of fine eyes and ingratiating manner that made their way to the heart of Madame de Poittevin. Laure was a remarkably beautiful and intelligent Norman girl of the upper bourgeois class. They were married in 1846. Guy and his brother Hervé, born six years later, were their only children.

Of all the influences which operated to make of Guy the writer he became, none is stronger than his mother's, not even that of Flaubert, his master. And it may be observed that he had for her throughout life an entire and absolute devotion. From an early age Laure had been interested in art and literature. She and her brother Alfred were intimates of Flaubert and were in turn critics, actors, and collaborators of his dramas. The fact that her husband cherished lower ideals made for infelicity in the household, and a friendly separation was agreed upon. This division of the family, which left the boys with their mother, meant that Madame de Maupassant became for a number of years almost the sole counselor of Guy.

For the first thirteen years of his life, De Maupassant's home was at Étretat. Situated near the sea, with an immense garden, which his mother had designed, the villa remained for him always his "dear house." He knew the fishermen and loved them as he loved the sea and the ships. His mother thought he would be a writer and so directed his life to that end. She kept his mind observant of sky

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

and ocean and the country—which was the rich country of Normandy. As the years of youth are most impressionable, so it was that De Maupassant returned again and again to Normandy for his material. In “Une Vie” he has portrayed the years of youth there; in the wandering life of the yacht, *Bel Ami*, he made use of his unforgettable early impressions of the sea. At the age of ten or eleven a solidly built boy, Guy, as he said of himself, was a “gourmand of life.” His mother also directed his reading bringing him, notably, to an appreciation of Shakespeare. “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and “Macbeth” were prime favorites with him, and later “Othello.” At an early age he was a lover of letters and began to see how with words one can paint pictures and evoke character. In addition he learned grammar, arithmetic, and Latin from the Vicar of Étretat.

When he was thirteen, his mother recognizing that he was ready for other lessons, placed him in a seminary at Yvetot. He was not happy, however, and managed soon to be expelled. Then he was sent to the lycée at Rouen. Here he came under the influence of Flaubert and Bouilhet. If the latter had lived, Madame de Maupassant used to say, her son would have been a poet. But he died, and, as all the world knows, under the influence of the other man of letters and his own genius he turned at last to the novel and the short story. Guy worked hard in the lycée. Perhaps, however, he was more interested in modern poetry than in the classics, and he developed also a love for the theater. In his vacations, he made dramatic presentations at home, just as his mother and her friends had done years before. In 1870 war broke out, giving the boy new subjects of observation, and later inspiring a number of his stories, especially “The Tallow Ball” (“Boule de Suif”), which portrays a woman living in Rouen at the time of the war, and “Mlle. Fifi,” whose heroine is the same as that of the “Boule de Suif.”

From 1871 to 1880 may be regarded as the period of immediate preparation for De Maupassant’s life-work. In Paris

obtained a position at the Ministry of the Navy,—he was transferred afterward to a more lucrative post Department of Public Education. At this epoch, the man was vigorous and strong as an ox; he was possessed of a thick head of curling hair and a florid complexion. He sailed and rowed; he loved his little boat and the Seine as he loved the fishermen and the sea at Étretat. It is on the Seine that he rowed one day from Paris to Rouen, carrying his books in his yawl. The Seine, he said, thrilled him with a new sense of life; sun-rise on the river, moon-rise on the river, parties on the river,—these became his chief delight. It would appear that the diversion was needed, since his duties were sufficiently monotonous and humble. The lives of little bureaucrats, however, were full of amusing situations and interesting incidents, some of which he has recorded in his stories, "The Necklace" ("La Parure"), "The Inheritance" ("L'Héritage") and a few others.

Though Flaubert, De Maupassant was also meeting such writers as Zola, Daudet, Turgeneff, Edmund de Goncourt, Coppée, Taine, Renan, and Mallarmé. From 1873 to 1877 he was studying constantly with Flaubert. His mother died during the period of study prolonged itself and her son neglected little, that he was forgetting his high calling. He said, "nothing presses me; I am learning my pro-

Flaubert had his student write from memory detailed descriptions of the Norman countryside; he sent him to libraries to obtain clerical work. He said later that he had given to him the value of direct observation and precise documentation. Guy's writing, at this time, consisted mostly of verses which he submitted to Flaubert for comment and criticism. He gradually developed an individual manner of seeing and he ceased to complain of the banality of events and the tedium of existence. But the master held him back from publication. "We don't want to make a flash in the pan," he reasoned. Between 1872 and 1880 De Maupassant published a number of poems, under the pen names of Joseph

Prunier and Guy de Valmont. In this period he came to be known to the most important publications of Paris,—*Le Gaulois*, *Le Figaro*, and *L'Echo*.

In 1880 De Maupassant published "The Tallow Ball" and a volume of verses. The success of the former was overwhelming and gave to the author a definite assurance that he should turn to the novel and the romance, to fiction rather than to poetry. In April, 1880, he resigned his post at the Ministry and consecrated himself to a life of letters.

The great decade of his life had begun. From 1880 to 1890 he published a long list of works, either short-stories or novels, marvelous for showing his fecundity. Of the novels, "Pierre et Jean" (1888) is perhaps the best known and is esteemed in addition, for the preface which presents the author's views about fiction writing. "The Necklace" is the most popular of the short stories.

After 1881, De Maupassant worked regularly from seven to twelve o'clock, writing, on the average, six pages a day. His rights as an author were soon five or six thousand dollars a year, and enabled him to enjoy the long voyages he had so often wished to make. In 1881 he visited Algiers, in 1882 he went to Bretagne, in 1885 to Italy, in 1887 to Sicily, and in 1888-1889 to Tunis. Another time he made a coasting trip along the shores of the Mediterranean; in 1886—and his biographer, Edouard Maynial, comments that this is not generally known—he visited England. Baron Ferdinand Rothschild had a country estate in Hampshire, to which he had invited De Maupassant. The Frenchman refused to visit London, but saw Oxford, at the command of his friend Paul Bourget. On his way back from Hampshire he tarried a moment in London, but pronounced it a "cold town" and hastily crossed the channel to his sunny Paris.

Often on returning from these vacations he "brought back a book in his valise." So the time was not lost from work.

He also built a house at Étretat, the one to which his valet François, refers in the first pages of the "Souvenirs" of his master. For a long time he spent part of each summer there

but as Madame de Maupassant had been living for many years at Nice, he gradually turned to the South for his vacations.

Guy de Maupassant would seem to have been so healthy as to defy disease of nervous character. Yet it was nervousness which, creeping upon him in the early seventies, proved his doom. Even in 1878, he was subject to discouragement, fatigue, and sadness. To ease his pain and inquietude he had recourse to ether, cocaine, morphine, chloroform, hasheesh, and other drugs. Undoubtedly their effect was to augment the trouble. Never a lover of the world, though thoroughly at home in it, a "man à la mode" as his countrymen would say, he became more and more a lover of solitude. The cruises in the Mediterranean are instances of his flight from the world of men. At last, insomnia became so frightful in its effects that he was advised, by Taine, to go to a rest resort. But his illness increased and by 1891 he recognized that further struggle was useless. Having attempted to end his life, he was placed in an asylum and carefully guarded. He died calmly, on the sixth of July, 1893, and was buried in the cemetery of Montparnasse.

He is the chief of French short-story writers. By a skilful if somewhat cynical portrayal of character, by a brief and vivid recountal of events, and by making one or two central incidents dominant he wins the reader's just admiration. He has reflected with powerful realism numerous phases of life in his own day.

Read these stories and try to find out how the author surprises the reader:

"The Furnished Room," by O. Henry (In "The Four Million").
 "The Luck of the Devil," by Holworthy Hall (Harold Porter)
 (In "Dormie One").

"The Tragedy of a Comic Song," by Leonard Merrick (In
 "Whispers About Women").

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"Marjorie Daw," by Thomas Bailey Aldrich (In "Marjorie Daw and Others").

"The Consul," by Richard Harding Davis (In "The Man Who Could Not Lose").

"The Bunker Mouse," by Frederick Stuart Greene (In Edward J. O'Brien's "Best Short Stories for 1917").

Other Stories by De Maupassant:

"Happiness," "A Coward," "The Piece of String," "La Mère Sauvage," "Moonlight," "The Confession," "A Ghost" (In "The Odd Number").

"Fear," "The Two Friends" (In "The Second Odd Number").

The student who knows French will do well to go to Maupassant directly in the original. "The Odd Number" is the best collection for the English reader.

PROPERTY OF
DAVE

A GALA DRESS *

BY MARY ELEANOR WILKINS FREEMAN

"I don't care anything about goin' to that Fourth of July picnic, 'Liz'beth." ¹

"I wouldn't say anything more about it, if I was you, Em'ly. I'd get ready an' go."

"I don't really feel able to go, 'Liz'beth."

"I'd like to know why you ain't able."

"It seems to me as if the fire-crackers an' the tootin' on those horns would drive me crazy; an' Matilda Jennings ² says they're goin' to have a cannon down there, an' fire it off every half-hour. I don't feel as if I could stan' it. You know my nerves ain't very strong, 'Liz'beth."

Elizabeth Babcock uplifted her long, delicate nose, ³ with its transparent nostrils, and sniffed. Apparently her sister's perverseness had an unacceptable odor to her. "I wouldn't talk so if I was you, Em'ly. Of course you're goin'. It's your turn to, an' you know it. I went to meetin' last Sabbath. You just put on that dress an' go." ⁴

Emily eyed her sister. She tried not to look pleased. "I know you went to meetin' last," said she, hesitatingly; "but—a Fourth of July picnic is—a little more of—a rarity." She fairly jumped, her sister confronted her with such sudden vigor.

"Rarity! Well, I hope a Fourth of July picnic ain't quite such a treat to me that I'd rather go to it than meetin'! I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself speakin' so, Em'ly Babcock."

Emily, a moment before delicately alert and nervous ⁵ like her sister, shrank limply in her limp black muslin. "I—didn't think how it sounded, 'Liz'beth."

* Copyright, 1891, by Harper and Brothers.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"Well, I should say you'd better think. It don't sound very becomin' for a woman of your age, an' professin' what you do. Now you'd better go an' get out that dress, an' rip the velvet off, an' sew the lace on.⁶ There won't be any too much time. They'll start early in the mornin'. I'll stir up a cake for you to carry, when I get tea."

"Don't you s'pose I could get along without a cake?" Emily ventured, tremulously.

"Well, I shouldn't think you'd want to go, an' be beholden to other folks for your eatin'; I shouldn't."

"I shouldn't want anything to eat."

"I guess if you go, you're goin' like other folks. I ain't goin' to have Matilda Jennings peekin' an' pryin' an' tellin' things,⁷ if I know it. You'd better get out that dress."

"Well," said Emily, with a long sigh of remorseful satisfaction. She arose, showing a height that would have approached the majestic had it not been so wavering. The sisters were about the same height, but Elizabeth usually impressed people as being the taller. She carried herself with so much decision that she seemed to keep every inch of her stature firm and taut, old woman although she was.

"Let's see that dress a minute," she said, when Emily returned. She wiped her spectacles, set them firmly, and began examining the hem of the dress, holding it close to her eyes. "You're gettin' of it all tagged out," she declared, presently. "I thought you was. I thought I see some ravellin's hangin' the other day when I had it on. It's jest because you don't stan' up straight. It ain't any longer for you than it is for me, if you didn't go all bent over so. There ain't any need of it."

Emily oscillated wearily over her sister and the dress. "I ain't very strong in my back, an' you know I've got a weakness in my stomach that hinders me from standin' up as straight as you do," she rejoined, rallying herself for a feeble defence.

"You can stan' up jest as well as I can, if you're a mind to."

A GALA DRESS

"I'll rip that velvet off now, if you'll let me have the dress, Liz'beth."

Elizabeth passed over the dress, handling it gingerly.

"Mind you don't cut it rippin' of it off," said she.^s

Emily sat down, and the dress lay in shiny black billows over her lap. The dress was black silk, and had been in its day very soft and heavy; even now there was considerable wear left in it. The waist and overskirt were trimmed with black velvet ribbon. Emily ripped off the velvet; then she sewed on some old-fashioned, straight-edged black lace full of little embroidered sprigs. The sisters sat in their parlor at the right of the front door. The room was very warm, for there were two west windows, and a hot afternoon sun was beating upon them. Out in front of the house was a piazza, with a cool uneven brick floor, and a thick lilac growth across the western end. The sisters might have sat there and been comfortable, but they would not.

"Set right out in the face an' eyes of all the neighbors!" they would have exclaimed with dismay had the idea been suggested. There was about these old women and all their belongings a certain gentle and deprecatory reticence. One felt it immediately upon entering their house, or indeed upon coming in sight of it. There were never any heads at the windows; the blinds were usually closed. Once in a while a passer-by might see an old woman, well shielded by shawl and scooping sun-bonnet, start up like a timid spirit in the yard, and softly disappear through a crack in the front door. Out in the front yard Emily had a little bed of flowers—of balsams and nasturtiums and portulacas; she tended them with furtive glances toward the road. Elizabeth came out in the early morning to sweep the brick floor of the piazza, and the front door was left ajar for a hurried flitting should any one appear.

This excessive shyness and secrecy had almost the aspect of guilt, but no more guileless and upright persons could have been imagined than these two old women. They had over their parlor windows full, softly-falling, old muslin curtains,

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

and they looped them back to leave bare the smallest possible space of glass. The parlor chairs retreated close to the walls, the polish of the parlor table lit up a dim corner. There were very few ornaments in sight; the walls were full of closets and little cupboards, and in them all superfluities were tucked away to protect them from dust and prying eyes. Never a door in the house stood open, every bureau drawer was squarely shut. A whole family of skeletons might have been well hidden in these guarded recesses; but skeletons there were none, except, perhaps, a little innocent bone or two of old-womanly pride and sensitiveness.

The Babcock sisters guarded nothing more jealously than the privacy of their meals. The neighbors considered that there was a decided reason for this. "The Babcock girls have so little to eat that they're ashamed to let folks see it," people said. It was certain that the old women regarded intrusion at their meals as an insult, but it was doubtful if they would not have done so had their table been set out with all the luxuries of the season instead of scanty bread and butter and no sauce. No sauce for tea was regarded as very poor living by the village women.⁹

To-night the Babcocks had tea very soon after the lace was sewed on the dress. They always had tea early. They were in the midst of it when the front-door opened, and a voice was heard calling out in the hall.

The sisters cast a dismayed and indignant look at each other; they both arose; but the door flew open, and their little square tea-table, with its green-and-white china pot of weak tea, its plate of bread and little glass dish of butter, its two china cups, and thin silver teaspoons, was displayed to view.

"My!" cried the visitor, with a little backward shuffle. "I do hope you'll scuse me! I didn't know you was eatin' supper. I wouldn't ha' come in for the world if I'd known. I'll go right out; it wa'n't anything pertickler, anyhow." All the time her sharp and comprehensive gaze was on the tea-table. She counted the slices of bread, she measured the butter, as she talked.¹⁰ The sisters stepped forward with dignity.

PROPERTY OF
DANIEL

A GALA DRESS

"Come into the other room," said Elizabeth; and the visitor, still protesting, with her backward eyes upon the tea-table, gave way before her.

But her eyes lighted upon something in the parlor¹¹ more eagerly than they had upon the frugal and exclusive table. The sisters glanced at each other in dismay. The black silk dress lay over a chair. The caller, who was their neighbor Matilda Jennings, edged toward it as she talked. "I thought I'd jest run over an' see if you wa'n't goin' to the picnic¹² to-morrow," she was saying. Then she clutched the dress and diverged. "Oh, you've been fixin' your dress!" she said to Emily, with innocent insinuation. Insinuation did not sit well upon Matilda Jennings, none of her bodily lines were adapted to it, and the pretence was quite evident. She was short and stout, with a hard, sallow rotundity of cheek, her small black eyes were bright-pointed under fleshy brows.

"Yes, I have," replied Emily, with a scared glance at Elizabeth.

"Yes," said Elizabeth, stepping firmly into the subject, and confronting Matilda with prim and resolute blue eyes. "She has been fixin' of it. The lace was ripped off, an' she had to mend it."

"It's pretty lace, ain't it? I had some of the same kind on a mantilla once when I was a girl. This makes me think of it. The sprigs in mine were set a little closer. Let me see, 'Liz'beth, your black silk is trimmed with velvet, ain't it?"

Elizabeth surveyed her calmly. "Yes! I've always worn black velvet on it,"¹³ said she.

Emily sighed faintly. She had feared that Elizabeth could not answer desirably and be truthful.

"Let me see," continued Matilda, "how was that velvet put on your waist?"

"It was put on peaked."

"In one peak or two?"

"One."

"Now I wonder if it would be too much trouble for you jest to let me see it a minute. I've been thinkin' of fixin' over

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

my old alpaca a little, an' I've got a piece of black velvet ribbon I've steamed over, an' it looks pretty good. I thought mebbe I could put it on like yours."

Matilda Jennings, in her chocolate calico, stood as relentlessly as any executioner before the Babcock sisters. They, slim and delicate and pale in their flabby black muslins, leaned toward each other, then Elizabeth straightened herself. "Some time when it's convenient I'd jest as soon show it as not," said she.¹⁴

"Well, I'd be much obleeged to you if you would," returned Matilda. Her manner was a trifle overawed, but there was a sharper gleam in her eyes. Pretty soon she went home, and ate her solitary and substantial supper of bread and butter, cold potatoes, and pork and beans. Matilda Jennings was as poor as the Babcocks. She had never, like them, known better days. She had never possessed any fine old muslins nor black silks in her life, but she had always eaten more.

The Babcocks had always delicately and unobtrusively felt themselves above her. There had been in their lives a faint savor of gentility and aristocracy. Their father had been college-educated and a doctor. Matilda's antecedents had been humble, even in this humble community. She had come of wood-sawyers and garden-laborers. In their youth, when they had gone to school and played together, they had always realized their height above Matilda, and even old age and poverty and a certain friendliness could not do away with it.

The Babcocks owned their house and a tiny sum in the bank, upon the interest of which they lived. Nobody knew how much it was, nobody would ever know while they lived. They might have had more if they would have sold or mortgaged their house, but they would have died first. They starved daintily and patiently on their little income. They mended their old muslins and Thibets, and wore one dress between them for best, taking turns in going out.¹⁵

It seemed inconsistent, but the sisters were very fond of society, and their reserve did not interfere with their pleasure in the simple village outings. They were more at ease abroad

A GALA DRESS

than at home, perhaps because there were not present so many doors which could be opened into their secrecy. But they had an arbitrary conviction that their claims to respect and consideration would be forever forfeited should they appear on state occasions in anything but black silk. To their notions of etiquette, black silk was as sacred a necessity as feathers at the English court. They could not go abroad and feel any self-respect in those flimsy muslins and rusty woollens, which were very flimsy and rusty. The old persons in the village could hardly remember when the Babcocks had a new dress. The dainty care with which they had made those tender old fabrics endure so long was wonderful. They held up their skirts primly when they walked; they kept their pointed¹⁶ elbows clear of chairs and tables. The black silk in particular was taken off the minute its wearer entered her own house. It was shaken softly, folded, and laid away in a linen sheet.

Emily was dressed in it on the Fourth of July morning¹⁷ when Matilda Jennings called for her. Matilda came in her voluminous old alpaca, with her tin lunch-pail on her arm. She looked at Emily in the black silk, and her countenance changed. "My! you ain't goin' to wear that black silk trailin' round in the woods, are you?" said she.

"I guess she won't trail around much," spoke up Elizabeth. "She's got to go lookin' decént."

Matilda's poor old alpaca had many a threadbare streak and mended slit in its rusty folds, the elbows were patched, it was hardly respectable. But she gave the skirt a defiant switch, and jerked the patched elbows. "Well, I allers believed in goin' dressed suitable for the occasion," said she, sturdily, and as if that was her especial picnic costume out of a large wardrobe. However, her bravado was not deeply seated; all day long she manœuvred to keep her patches and darns out of sight, she arranged the skirt nervously every time she changed her position, she held her elbows close to her sides, and she made many little flings at Emily's black silk.

The festivities were nearly over, the dinner had been eaten, Matilda had devoured with relish her brown-bread and cheese

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

and cold pork, and Emily had nibbled daintily at her sweet-cake, and glanced with inward loathing at her neighbor's grosser fare. The speeches by the local celebrities were delivered, the cannon had been fired every half-hour, the sun was getting low in the west, and a golden mist was rising among the ferny undergrowth in the grove.¹⁸ "It's gettin' damp; I can see it risin'," said Emily, who was rheumatic; "I guess we'd better walk 'round a little, an' then go home."

"Well," replied Matilda, "I'd jest as soon. You'd better hold up your dress."

The two old women adjusted themselves stiffly upon their feet, and began ranging the grove, stepping warily over the slippery pine-needles. The woods were full of merry calls; the green distances fluttered with light draperies. Every little while came the sharp bang of a fire-cracker, the crash of cannon, or the melancholy hoot of a fish-horn. Now and then blue gunpowder smoke curled up with the golden steam from the dewy ground. Emily was near-sighted; she moved on with innocently peering eyes, her long neck craned forward. Matilda had been taking the lead, but she suddenly stepped aside.¹⁹ Emily walked on unsuspectingly, holding up her precious black silk. There was a quick puff of smoke, a leap of flame, a volley of vicious little reports, and poor Emily Babcock danced as a martyr at her fiery trial might have done; her gentle dignity completely deserted her. "Oh, oh, oh!" she shrieked.

Matilda Jennings pushed forward; by that time Emily was standing, pale and quivering, on a little heap of ashes. "You stepped into a nest of fire-crackers," said Matilda; "a boy jest run; I saw him. What made you stan' there in 'em? Why didn't you get out?"

"I—couldn't," gasped Emily; she could hardly speak.

"Well, I guess it ain't done much harm; them boys ought to be prosecuted. You don't feel as if you was burned anywhere, do you, Em'ly?"

"No—I guess not."

"Seems to me your dress—— Jest let me look at your

A GALA DRESS

dress, Em'ly. My! ain't that a wicked shame! Jest look at all them holes, right in the flouncin', where it'll show!"

It was too true. The flounce that garnished the bottom of the black silk was scorched in a number of places. Emily looked at it and felt faint. "I must go right home," she moaned. "Oh, dear!"

"Mebbe you can darn it, if you're real pertickler about it," said Matilda, with an uneasy air.²⁰

Emily said nothing; she went home. Her dress switched the dust off the wayside weeds, but she paid no attention to it; she walked so fast that Matilda could hardly keep up with her. When she reached her own gate she swung it swiftly to before Matilda's face, then she fled into the house.

Elizabeth came to the parlor door with a letter in her hand.²¹ She cried out, when she saw her sister's face. "What is the matter, Em'ly, for pity sakes?"

"You can't never go out again, 'Liz'beth; you can't! you can't!"

"Why can't I go out, I'd like to know? What do you mean, Em'ly Babcock?"

"You can't, you never can again. I stepped into some firecrackers, an' I've burned some great holes right in the flouncin'. You can't never wear it without folks knowin'. Matilda Jennings will tell. Oh, 'Liz'beth, what will you do?"

"Do?" said Elizabeth. "Well, I hope I ain't so set on goin' out at my time of life as all that comes to. Let's see it. H'm, I can mend that."

"No, you can't. Matilda would see it if you did. Oh, dear! oh, dear!" Emily dropped into a corner and put her slim hands over her face.

"Do stop actin' so," said her sister. "I've jest had a letter, an' Aunt 'Liz'beth is dead."

After a little Emily looked up. "When did she die?" she asked, in a despairing voice.

"Last week."

"Did they ask us to the funeral?"

"Of course they did; it was last Friday, at two o'clock in

the afternoon. They knew the letter couldn't get to us till after the funeral; but of course they'd ask us."

"What did they say the matter was?"

"Old age, I guess, as much as anything. Aunt 'Liz'beth was a good deal over eighty."

Emily sat reflectively; she seemed to be listening while her sister related more at length the contents of the letter. Suddenly she interrupted. "'Liz'beth."

"Well?"

"I was thinkin', 'Liz'beth—you know those crape veils we wore when mother died?"

"Well, what of 'em?"

"I—don't see why—you couldn't—make a flounce of those veils, an' put on this dress when you wore it; then she wouldn't know."

"I'd like to know what I'd wear a crape flounce for?"

"Why, mournin' for Aunt 'Liz'beth."

"Em'ly Babcock, what sense would there be in my wearin' mournin' when you didn't?"

"You was named for her, an' it's a very diff'rent thing. You can jest tell folks that you was named for your aunt that jest died, an' you felt as if you ought to wear a little crape on your best dress."

"It'll be an awful job to put on a different flounce every time we wear it."

"I'll do it; I'm perfectly willin' to do it. Oh, 'Liz'beth, I shall die if you ever go out again an' wear that dress."

"For pity sakes, don't, Em'ly! I'll get out those veils after supper an' look at 'em."²²

The next Sunday Elizabeth wore the black silk garnished with a crape flounce to church. Matilda Jennings walked home with her,²³ and eyed the new trimming sharply. "Got a new flounce, ain't you?" said she, finally.

"I had word last week that my aunt 'Liz'beth Taylor was dead, an' I thought it wa'n't anything more'n fittin' that I should put on a little crape," replied Elizabeth, with dignity.

"Has Em'ly put on mournin', too?"

PROPERTY OF
NAME

"Em'ly ain't any call to. She wa'n't named after her, as I was, an' she never saw her but once, when she was a little girl. It ain't more'n ten years since I saw her. She lived out West. I didn't feel as if Em'ly had any call to wear erape."

Matilda said no more, but there was unquelled suspicion in her eye as they parted at the Babcock gate.

The next week ²⁴ a trunk full of Aunt Elizabeth Taylor's clothes arrived from the West. Her daughter had sent them. There was in the trunk a goodly store of old woman's finery, two black silks among the other gowns. Aunt Elizabeth had been a dressy old lady, although she died in her eighties. It was a great surprise to the sisters. They had never dreamed of such a thing. They palpitated with awe and delight as they took out the treasures. Emily clutched Elizabeth, the thin hand closing around the thin arm.

"'Liz'beth!"

"What is it?"

"We—won't say—anything about this to anybody. We'll jest go together to meetin' next Sabbath, an' wear these black silks, an' let Matilda Jennings see."

Elizabeth looked at Emily. A gleam came into her dim blue eye; she tightened her thin lips. "*Well, we will,*" ²⁵ said she.

The following Sunday the sisters wore the black silks to church. During the week they appeared together at a sewing meeting, then at church again. The wonder and curiosity were certainly not confined to Matilda Jennings. The eccentricity which the Babcock sisters displayed in not going into society together had long been a favorite topic in the town. There had been a great deal of speculation over it. Now that they had appeared together three consecutive times, there was much talk. ²⁶

On the Monday following ²⁷ the second Sunday Matilda Jennings went down to the Babcock house. Her cape-bonnet was on one-sided, but it was firmly tied. She opened the door softly, when her old muscles were straining forward to jerk

the latch. She sat gently down in the proffered chair, and displayed quite openly a worn place over the knees in her calico gown.

"We had a pleasant Sabbath yesterday, didn't we?" said she.

"Real pleasant," assented the sisters.

"I thought we had a good discourse."

The Babcocks assented again.

"I heerd a good many say they thought it was a good discourse," repeated Matilda, like an emphatic chorus. Then she suddenly leaned forward, and her face, in the depths of her awry bonnet, twisted into a benevolent smile. "I was real glad to see you out together," she whispered, with meaning emphasis.

The sisters smiled stiffly.

Matilda paused for a moment; she drew herself back, as if to gather strength for a thrust; she stopped smiling. "I was glad to see you out together, for I thought it was too bad the way folks was talkin'," she said.

Elizabeth looked at her. "How were they talkin'?"

"Well, I don' know as there's any harm in my tellin' you. I've been thinkin' mebbe I ought to for some time. It's been round consider'ble lately that you an' Em'ly didn't get along well, an' that was the reason you didn't go out more together. I told 'em I hadn't no idea 'twas so, though, of course, I couldn't really tell. I was real glad to see you out together, 'cause there's never any knowin' how folks do get along, an' I was real glad to see you'd settled it if there had been any trouble."

"There ain't been any trouble."

"Well, I'm glad if there ain't been any, an' if there has, I'm glad to see it settled, an' I know other folks will be too."

Elizabeth stood up. "If you want to know the reason why we haven't been out together, I'll tell you," said she. "You've been tryin' to find out things every way you could, an' now I'll tell you. You've drove me to it. We had just one decent dress between us, an' Em'ly an' me took turns wearin' it, an'

A GALA DRESS

used to wear lace on it, an' I used to rip off the lace
ew on black velvet when I wore it, so folks shouldn't
it was the same dress. Em'ly an' me never had a word
r lives, an' it's a wicked lie for folks to say we have."
ily was softly weeping in her handkerchief; there was
tear in Elizabeth's eyes; there were bright spots on her
s, and her slim height overhung Matilda Jennings im-
gly.

y Aunt 'Liz'beth, that I was named for, died two or three
s ago," she continued, "an' they sent us a trunk full of
clothes, an' there was two decent dresses among 'em, an'
the reason why Em'ly an' me have been out together
Now, Matilda Jennings, you have found out the whole
an' I hope you're satisfied."

w that the detective instinct and the craving inquisitive-
which were so strong in this old woman were satisfied,
ould have been more jubilant than she was. She had
cted what nobody else in town had suspected; she had
ed her suspicion, and discovered what the secrecy and
of the sisters had concealed from the whole village, still
looked uneasy and subdued. "I shan't tell anybody,"
she.

ou can tell nobody you're a mind to."

shan't tell nobody." Matilda Jennings arose; she had
d the parlor door, when she faced about. "I s'pose I
r begretched you that black silk," said she, "or I shouldn't
eared so much about findin' out. I never had a black
yself, nor any of my folks that I ever heard of. I ain't
othin' decent to wear anyway."

ere was a moment's silence. "We shan't lay up any-
" said Elizabeth then, and Emily sobbed responsively.
da passed on, and opened the outer door. Elizabeth
ered to her sister, and Emily nodded, eagerly. "You
er," said she.

atilda," called Elizabeth. Matilda looked back. "I was
oin' to say that, if you wouldn't resent it, it got burned
but we mended it nice, that you was perfectly welcome

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

to that—black silk. Em'ly an' me don't really need it, an' we'd be glad to have you have it."

There were tears in Matilda Jennings' black eyes, but she held them unwinkingly. "Thank ye," she said, in a grateful voice, and stepped along over the piazza down the steps. She reached Emily's flower garden. The peppery sweetness of the nasturtiums came up in her face; it was quite early in the day, and the portulacas were still out in a splendid field of crimson and yellow. Matilda turned about, her broad foot just cleared a yellow portulaca which had straggled into the path, but she did not notice it. The homely figure pushed past the flowers and into the house again. She stood before Elizabeth and Emily. "Look here," said she, with a faint light struggling out of her coarse old face, "I want to tell you—I see them fire-crackers a-sizzlin' before Em'ly stepped in 'em."

PROPERTY OF
DAVID



MARY WILKINS FREEMAN

MARY ELEANOR WILKINS FREEMAN

As the name of Hawthorne is associated with earlier New England so that of Mary Wilkins Freeman calls up pictures of the same section in our own day. Born in Randolph, Massachusetts, in 1862, Mary Eleanor Wilkins lived there and at Brattleboro, Vermont, until the time of her marriage in 1902, to Dr. C. M. Freeman, of Metuchen, New Jersey. Since her stories, "An Honest Soul" and "A Gatherer of Simples" appeared (in 1884) in *Harper's Magazine* she has been regarded as one of the chief interpreters of New England life. For thirty years she has turned out story after story, and volume after volume, reflecting the life of village and farm. In the latter part of this period, she has also written charming stories about children in a seemingly new environment, such an environment, one would guess, as is found in Metuchen. These narratives, though possessing interest in their reflection of present-day life, add little to her fame, which was secure after the appearance of her first volumes, "A New England Nun," and "A Humble Romance." Other important works are "Silence," "The Love of Parson Lord," "The Givers," "The Winning Lady," and "The Copy-Cat." The first-named takes its title from the story, "Silence," which is similar to Hawthorne's tales of colonial days. "The Copy-Cat," a collection of stories about children in general, emphasizes her departure from earlier subject matter and manner.

In her New England stories, Mrs. Freeman (Miss Wilkins she was when she wrote them) exploits the hardened farmer, his patient wife, and his meek children. Grandmothers and grandfathers, old ladies and old men who fear the poor-house, and old maids of the aristocracy, as well as of the humbler classes, who strain to "make both ends meet," are also among her favorites. "A Village Lear" indicates by its

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

title that New England no less than Britain and Russia can tell its tale of daughters who neglect their father; "A Taste of Honey" presents the drama of a farmer's daughter who having promised "to pay off the mortgage" does so at the cost of losing her chance for happiness; "Gentian" recounts the separation and reunion of a pair in their dotage, after forty years of married life. "A Humble Romance" depicts the pathos in the life of the poor child who "lives out" and "works for her keep." "A Gala Dress" celebrates three of her numerous old maids. So brief a summary will illustrate the fact that Mrs. Freeman is a literary historian of her own time and locality,—chiefly Massachusetts and Vermont in the late nineteenth century.

Other Stories by Mary Wilkins Freeman:

- "A Humble Romance," "Gentian," "An Independent Thinker"
(In "A Humble Romance").
- "A Church Mouse," "A New England Nun," "The Revolt of
"Mother" (In "A New England Nun").
- "Young Lucretia" (In "Young Lucretia").
- "Silence," "Evelina's Garden" (In "Silence").
- "The Winning Lady," "Old Woman Magoun" (In "The Win-
ning Lady and Others").
- "The Gold" (In "The Fair Lavinia").
- "Big Sister Solly," "The Cock of the Walk," "The Copy-
Cat" (In "The Copy-Cat").
- "The Shadows on the Wall: A Ghost Story" (In "The Wind
in the Rosebush").

Read, in connection with "A Gala Dress": "Lady Eleanore's
Mantle," by Nathaniel Hawthorne (In "Twice-Told
Tales").

UNDER THE LION'S PAW

BY HAMLIN GARLAND

I

It was the last of autumn and first day of winter coming together. All day long the plowmen on their prairie farms had moved to and fro on their wide level fields through the falling snow, which melted as it fell, wetting them to the skin—all day, notwithstanding the frequent squalls of snow, the dripping, desolate clouds, and the muck of the furrows, black and tenacious as tar.¹

Under their dripping harness the horses swung to and fro silently, with that marvelous uncomplaining patience which marks the horse. All day the wild geese, honking wildly, as they sprawled sidewise down the wind, seemed to be fleeing from an enemy behind, and with neck out-thrust and wings extended, sailed down the wind, soon lost to sight.

Yet the plowman behind his plow, though the snow lay on his ragged great-coat, and the cold clinging mud rose on his heavy boots, fettering him like gyves, whistled in the very beard of the gale. As day passed, the snow, ceasing to melt, lay along the plowed land, and lodged in the depth of the stubble, till on each slow round the last furrow stood out black and shining as jet between the plowed land and the gray stubble.

When night began to fall, and the geese, flying low, began to alight invisibly in the near cornfield, Stephen Council was still at work "finishing a land." He rode on his sulky-plow when going with the wind, but walked when facing it. Sitting bent and cold but cheery under his slouch hat, he talked encouragingly to his four-in-hand.

"Come round there, boys!—Round agin! We got t' finish this land. Come in there, Dan! *Stiddy*, Kate—stiddy! None

o' y'r tantrums, Kittie. It's purty tuff, but got a be did *Tchk! tchk!* Step along, Pete! Don't let Kate git y'r single tree on the wheel. *Once more!*"²

They seemed to know what he meant, and that this was the last round, for they worked with greater vigor than before.

"Once more, boys, an' then sez I oats an' a nice warm stall an' sleep f'r all."

By the time the last furrow was turned on the land it was too dark to see the house, and the snow was changing to rain again. The tired and hungry man could see the light from the kitchen shining through the leafless hedge, and he lifted a great shout, "Supper f'r half a dozen!"

It was nearly eight o'clock by the time he had finished his chores and started for supper. He was picking his way carefully through the mud, when the tall form of a man loomed up before him with a premonitory cough.

"Waddy ye want?" was the rather startled question of the farmer.

"Well, ye see," began the stranger, in a deprecating tone "we'd like t' git in f'r the night. We've tried every house f'r the last two miles, but they hadn't any room f'r us. My wife's jest about sick, 'n' the children are cold and hungry——"

"Oh, y' want 'o stay all night, eh?"

"Yes, sir; it 'ud be a great accom——"

"Waal, I don't make it a practice t' turn anybody away hungry, not on sech nights as this. Drive right in. We ain't got much, but sech as it is——"

But the stranger had disappeared. And soon his steaming weary team, with drooping heads and swinging single-trees moved past the well to the block beside the path. Council stood at the side of the "schooner"³ and helped the children out—two little half-sleeping children—and then a small woman with a babe in her arms.

"There ye go!" he shouted, jovially, to the children. "Now we're all right! Run right along to the house there, an' tel Mam' Council you wants sumpthin' t' eat. Right this way, Mis

—keep right off t' the right there. I'll go an' git a lantern. Come," he said to the dazed and silent group at his side.

"Mother," he shouted as he neared the fragrant and warmly-lighted kitchen, "here are some wayfarers an' folks who need sumptin' t' eat an' a place t' snooze." He ended by pushing them all in.

Mrs. Council, a large, jolly, rather coarse-looking woman, took the children in her arms. "Come right in, you little rabbits. 'Most asleep, hey? Now here's a drink o' milk f'r each o' ye. I'll have s'm tea in a minute. Take off y'r things and set up t' the fire."

While she set the children to drinking milk, Council got out his lantern and went out to the barn to help the stranger about his team, where his loud, hearty voice could be heard as it came and went between the hay-mow and the stalls.

The woman came to light as a small, timid, and discouraged-looking woman, but still pretty, in a thin and sorrowful way.

"Land sakes! An' you've traveled all the way from Clear Lake t'-day in this mud! Waal! waal! No wonder you're all tired out. Don't wait f'r the men, Mis'——" She hesitated for the name.

"Haskins."

"Mis' Haskins, set right up to the table an' take a good swig o' tea whilst I make y' s'm toast. It's green tea, an' it's good. I tell Council as I git older I don't seem to enjoy Young Hyson n'r Gunpowder. I want the reel green tea, jest as it comes off'n the vines. Seems t' have more heart in it some way. Don't s'pose it has. Council says it's all in m' eye."

Going on in this easy way, she soon had the children filled with bread and milk and the woman thoroughly at home, eating some toast and sweet-melon pickles, and sipping the tea.

"See the little rats!" she laughed at the children. "They're full as they can stick now, and they want to go to bed. Now, don't git up, Mis' Haskins; set right where you are an' let me look after 'em. I know all about young ones, though I'm all alone now. Jane went an' married last fall. But, as I tell

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Council, it's lucky we keep our health. Set right there, Miss Haskins; I won't have you stir a finger."

It was an unmeasured pleasure to sit there in the warm, homely kitchen, the jovial chatter of the housewife driving out and holding at bay the growl of the impotent, cheated wind.

The little woman's eyes filled with tears which fell down upon the sleeping baby in her arms. The world was not so desolate and cold and hopeless, after all.

"Now I hope Council won't stop out there and talk politics all night. He's the greatest man to talk politics an' read the *Tribune*—— How old is it?"

She broke off and peered down at the face of the babe.

"Two months 'n' five days," said the mother, with a mother's exactness.

"Ye don't say! I want 'o know! The dear little pudzy-wudzy!" she went on, stirring it up in the neighborhood of the ribs with her fat fore-finger. "Pooty tough on 'oo to go gallivant'n' 'cross lots this way——"

"Yes, that's so; a man can't lift a mountain," said Council, entering the door. "Mother, this is Mr. Haskins, from Kansas. He's been eat up 'n' drove out by grasshoppers."

"Glad t' see yeh!—Pa, empty that wash-basin 'n' give him a chance t' wash."

Haskins was a tall man, with a thin, gloomy face. His hair was a reddish brown, like his coat, and seemed equally faded by the wind and sun. And his sallow face, though hard and set, was pathetic somehow. You would have felt that he had suffered much by the line of his mouth showing under his thin yellow mustache.

"Hain't Ike got home yet, Sairy?"

"Hain't seen 'im."

"W-a-a-l, set right up, Mr. Haskins; wade right into what we've got; 'tain't much, but we manage to live on it—she gits fat on it," laughed Council, pointing his thumb at his wife.

After supper, while the women put the children to bed, Haskins and Council⁴ talked on, seated near the huge cook-

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

ing-stove, the steam rising from their wet clothing. In the western fashion Council told as much of his own life as he drew from his guest. He asked but few questions, but by and by the story of Haskins' struggles and defeat came out. The story was a terrible one,⁵ but he told it quietly, seated with his elbows on his knees, gazing most of the time at the hearth.

"I didn't like the looks of the country, anyhow," Haskins said, partly rising and glancing at his wife. "I was ust t' northern Ingyannie, where we have lots o' timber 'n' lots o' rain, 'n' I didn't like the looks o' that dry prairie. What galled me the worst was goin' s' far away acrosst so much fine land layin' all through here vacant."

"And the 'hoppers eat ye four years hand runnin', did they?"

"Eat! They wiped us out. They chawed everything that was green. They jest set around waitin' f'r us to die t' eat us, too. My God! I ust t' dream of 'em sittin' 'round on the bedpost, six feet long, workin' their jaws. They et the fork-handles. They got worse 'n' worse till they jest rolled on one another, piled up like snow in winter. Well, it ain't no use. If I was t' talk all winter I couldn't tell nawthin'. But all the while I couldn't help thinkin' of all that land back here that nobuddy was usin' that I ought o' had stead o' bein' out there in that cussed country."

"Waal, why didn't ye stop an' settle here?" asked Ike, who had come in and was eating his supper.

"Fer the simple reason that you fellers wantid ten 'r fifteen dollars an acre⁶ fer the bare land, and I hadn't no money fer that kind o' thing."

"Yes, I do my own work," Mrs. Council was heard to say in the pause which followed. "I'm a gettin' purty heavy t' be on m' laigs all day, but we can't afford t' hire, so I keep rackin' around somehow, like a foundered horse. S' lame—I tell Council he can't tell how lame I am, f'r I'm jest as lame in one laig as t'other." And the good soul laughed at the joke on herself as she took a handful of flour and dusted the biscuit-board to keep the dough from sticking.⁷

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"Well, I hain't *never* been very strong," said Mrs. Haskins. "Our folks was Canadians an' small-boned, and then since my last child I hain't got up again fairly. I don't like t' complain. Tim has about all he can bear now—but they was days this week when I jest wanted to lay right down an' die."

"Wall, now, I'll tell ye," said Council, from his side of the stove, silencing everybody with his good-natured roar, "I'd go down and *see* Butler, *anyway*, if I was you. I guess he'd let you have his place purty cheap; the farm's all run down. He's ben anxious t' let t' somebuddy next year. It 'ud be a good chance fer you. Anyhow, you go to bed and sleep like a babe. I've got some plowing t' do, anyhow, an' we'll see if somethin' can't be done about your case. Ike, you go out an' see if the horses is all right, an' I'll show the folks t' bed."

When the tired husband and wife were lying under the generous quilts of the spare bed, Haskins listened a moment to the wind in the eaves, and then said, with a slow and solemn tone:

"There are people in this world who are good enough t' be angels an' only haff t' die to *be* angels."

II

Jim Butler^s was one of those men called in the West "land poor." Early in the history of Rock river he had come into the town and started in the grocery business in a small way, occupying a small building in a mean part of the town. At this period of his life he earned all he got, and was up early and late sorting beans, working over butter, and carting his goods to and from the station. But a change came over him at the end of the second year, when he sold a lot of land for four times what he paid for it. From that time forward he believed in land speculation as the surest way of getting rich. Every cent he could save or spare from his trade he put into land at forced sale, or mortgages on land, which were "just as good as the wheat," he was accustomed to say.

Farm after farm fell into his hands, until he was recog-

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

UNDER THE LION'S PAW

nized as one of the leading land-owners of the county. His mortgages were scattered all over Cedar county, and as they slowly but surely fell in he sought usually to retain the former owner as tenant.

He was not ready to foreclose; indeed, he had the name of being one of the "easiest" men in the town. He let the debtor off again and again, extending the time whenever possible.

"I don't want y'r land," he said. "All I'm after is the int'rest on my money—that's all. Now, if y' want 'o stay on the farm, why, I'll give y' a good chance. I can't have the land layin' vacant." And in many cases the owner remained as tenant.

In the meantime he had sold his store; he couldn't spend time in it; he was mainly occupied now with sitting around town on rainy days smoking and "gassin' with the boys," or in riding to and from his farms. In fishing-time he fished a good deal. Doc Grimes, Ben Ashley, and Cal Cheatham were his cronies on these fishing excursions or hunting trips in the time of chickens or partridges. In winter they went to northern Wisconsin to shoot deer.

In spite of all these signs of easy life Butler persisted in saying he "hadn't enough money to pay taxes on his land," and was careful to convey the impression that he was poor in spite of his twenty farms. At one time he was said to be worth fifty thousand dollars, but land had been a little slow of sale of late, so that he was not worth so much.

A fine farm, known as the Higley place, had fallen into his hands in the usual way the previous year, and he had not been able to find a tenant for it. Poor Higley, after working himself nearly to death on it in the attempt to lift the mortgage, had gone off to Dakota, leaving the farm and his curse⁹ to Butler.

This was the farm which Council advised Haskins to apply for; and the next day Council hitched up his team and drove down town to see Butler.¹⁰

"You jest let *me* do the talkin'," he said. "We'll find him

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

wearin' out his pants on some salt barrel somew'ers; and if he thought you *wanted* a place he'd sock it to you hot and heavy. You jest keep quiet; I'll fix 'im."

Butler was seated in Ben Ashley's store telling fish yarns, when Council sauntered in casually.

"Hello, But; lyin' agin, hey?"

"Hello, Steve! how goes it?"

"Oh, so-so. Too dang much rain in these days. I thought it was goin' t' freeze up f'r good last night. Tight squeak if I get m' plowin' done. How's farmin' with *you* these days?"

"Bad. Plowin' ain't half done."

"It 'ud be a religious idee f'r you t' go out an' take a hand y'rself."

"I don't haff to," said Butler, with a wink.

"Got anybody on the Higley place?"

"No. Know of anybody?"

"Wall, no; not eggsackly. I've got a relation back t' Michigan who 's ben hot an' cold on the idee o' comin' West f'r some time. *Might* come if he could get a good lay-out. What do you talk on the farm?"

"Well, I d' know. I'll rent it on shares or I'll rent it money rent."

"Wall, how much money, say?"

"Well, say ten per cent, on the price—two-fifty."

"Wall, that ain't bad. Wait on 'im till 'e thrashes?"

Haskins listened eagerly to his important question, but Council was coolly eating a dried apple which he had speared out of a barrel with his knife. Butler studied him carefully.

"Well, knocks me out of twenty-five dollars interest."

"My relation'll need all he's got t' git his crops in," said Council, in the safe indifferent way.

"Well, all right; *say* wait," concluded Butler.

"All right; this is the man. Haskins, this is Mr. Butler—no relation to Ben—the hardest-working man in Cedar county."

On the way home, Haskins said: "I ain't much better off. I'd like that farm; it's a good farm, but it's all run down, an'

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

UNDER THE LION'S PAW

so'm I. I could make a good farm of it if I had half a show. But I can't stock it n'r seed it."

"Wall, now, don't you worry," roared Council in his ear. "We'll pull y' through somehow till next harvest. He's agreed t' hire it plowed, an' you can earn a hundred dollars plowin' an' y' c'n git the seed o' me, an' pay me back when y' can."

Haskins was silent with emotion, but at last he said: "I ain't got nothin' t' live on."

"Now, don't you worry 'bout that. You jest make your headquarters at ol' Steve Council's. Mother 'll take a pile o' comfort in havin' y'r wife an' children 'round. Y' see, Jane's married off lately, an' Ike 's away a good 'eal, so we'll be darn glad t' have y' stop with us this winter. Nex' spring we'll see if y' can't git a start agin." And he chirruped to the team, which sprang forward with the rumbling, clattering wagon.

"Say, looky here, Council, you can't do this. I never saw——" shouted Haskins in his neighbor's ear.

Council moved about uneasily in his seat and stopped his stammering gratitude by saying "Hold on, now; don't make such a fuss over a little thing. When I see a man down, an' things all on top of 'm, I jest like t' kick 'em off an' help 'm up. That's the kind of religion ¹¹ I got, an' it's about the *only* kind."

They rode the rest of the way home in silence. And when the red light of the lamp shone out into the darkness of the cold and windy night, and he thought of this refuge for his children and wife, Haskins could have put his arm around the neck of his burly companion and squeezed him like a lover. But he contented himself with saying: "Steve Council, you'll git y'r pay f'r this some day!"

"Don't want any pay. My religion ain't run on such business principles."

The wind was growing colder, and the ground was covered with a white frost, as they turned into the gate of the Council farm, and the children came rushing out, shouting, "Papa's

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

come!" They hardly looked like the same children who had sat at the table the night before. Their torpidity under the influence of sunshine and Mother Council had given way to a sort of spasmodic cheerfulness, as insects in winter revive when laid on the hearth.

III

Haskins worked like a fiend, and his wife, like the heroic woman that she was, bore also uncomplainingly the most terrible burdens.¹² They rose early and toiled without intermission till the darkness fell on the plain, then tumbled into bed, every bone and muscle aching with fatigue, to rise with the sun next morning to the same round of the same ferocity of labor.

The eldest boy drove a team all through the spring, plowing and seeding, milked the cows, and did chores innumerable, in most ways taking the place of a man.

An infinitely pathetic but common figure—this boy on the American farm, where there is no law against child labor. To see him in his coarse clothing, his huge boots, and his ragged cap, as he staggered with a pail of water from the well, or trudged in the cold and cheerless dawn out into the frosty field behind his team, gave the city-bred visitor a sharp pang of sympathetic pain. Yet Haskins loved his boy, and would have saved him from this if he could, but he could not.

By June the first year the result of such Herculean toil began to show on the farm. The yard was cleaned up and sown to grass, the garden plowed and planted, and the house mended.

Council had given them four of his cows.

"Take 'em an' run 'em on shares. I don't want a milk s' many. Ike's away s' much now, Sat'dys an' Sund'ys, I can't stand the bother anyhow."

Other men, seeing the confidence of Council in the new-comer, had sold him tools on time; and as he was really an able farmer, he soon had round him many evidences of his care

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

UNDER THE LION'S PAW

and thrift. At the advice of Council he had taken the farm for three years, with the privilege of re-renting or buying at the end of the term.

"It's a good bargain, an' y' want 'o nail it," said Council. "If you have any kind ov a crop, you c'n pay y'r debts, an' keep seed an' bread."

The new hope which now sprang up in the heart of Haskins and his wife grew great almost as a pain by the time the wide field of wheat began to wave and rustle and swirl in the winds of July. Day after day he would snatch a few moments after supper to go and look at it.

"Have ye seen the wheat t'-day, Nettie?" he asked one night as he rose from supper.

"No, Tim, I ain't had time."

"Well, take time now. Le's go look at it."

She threw an old hat on her head—Tommy's hat—and looking almost pretty in her thin sad way, went out with her husband to the hedge.

"Ain't it grand, Nettie? Just look at it."

It was grand. Level, russet here and there, heavy-headed, wide as a lake, and full of multitudinous whispers and gleams of wealth, it stretched away before the gazers like the fabled field of the cloth of gold.

"Oh, I think—I *hope* we'll have a good crop, Tim; and oh, how good the people have been to us!"

"Yes; I don't know where we'd be t'-day if it hadn't ben for Council and his wife."

"They're the best people in the world," said the little woman, with a great sob of gratitude.

"We'll be in the field on Monday, sure," said Haskins, gripping the rail on the fence as if already at the work of the harvest.

The harvest came, bounteous, glorious, but the winds came and blew it into tangles, and the rain matted it here and there close to the ground, increasing the work of gathering it three-fold.

Oh, how they toiled in those glorious days! Clothing drip-

ping with sweat, arms aching, filled with briers, fingers raw and bleeding, backs broken with the weight of heavy bundles, Haskins and his man toiled on. Tommy drove the harvester, while his father and a hired man bound on the machine. In this way they cut ten acres every day, and almost every night after supper, when the hand went to bed, Haskins returned to the field, shocking the bound grain in the light of the moon. Many a night he worked till his anxious wife came out at ten o'clock to call him in to rest and lunch.

At the same time she cooked for the men, took care of the children, washed and ironed, milked the cows at night, made the butter, and sometimes fed the horses and watered them while her husband kept at the shocking.

No slave in the Roman galleys could have toiled so frightfully and lived, for this man thought himself a free man, and that he was working for his wife and babes.

When he sank into his bed with a deep groan of relief, too tired to change his grimy, dripping clothing, he felt that he was getting nearer and nearer to a home of his own, and pushing the wolf of want a little farther from his door.

There is no despair so deep as the despair of a homeless man or woman. To roam the roads of the country or the streets of the city, to feel there is no rood of ground on which the feet can rest, to halt weary and hungry outside lighted windows and hear laughter and song within—these are the hungers and rebellions that drive men to crime and women to shame.

It was the memory of this homelessness, and the fear of its coming again, that spurred Timothy Haskins and Nettie, his wife, to such ferocious labor during that first year.

IV

"'M, yes; 'm, yes; first-rate," said Butler, as his eye took in the neat garden, the pig-pen, and the well-filled barn-yard.¹³ "You're git'n quite a stock around yeh. Done well, eh?"

Haskins was showing Butler around the place. He had

not seen it for a year, having spent the year in Washington and Boston with Ashley, his brother-in-law, who had been elected to Congress.

"Yes, I've laid out a good deal of money during the last three years. I've paid out three hundred dollars f'r fencin'."

"Um-h'm! I see, I see," said Butler, while Haskins went on:

"The kitchen there cost two hundred; the barn ain't cost much in money, but I've put a lot o' time on it. I've dug a new well, and I——"

"Yes, yes. I see! You've done well. Stawk worth a thousand dollars," said Butler, picking his teeth with a straw.

"About that," said Haskins, modestly. "We begin to feel as if we was git'n' a home f'r ourselves; but we've worked hard. I tell you we begin to feel it, Mr. Butler, and we're goin' t' begin to ease up purty soon. We've been kind o' blannin' a trip back t' *her* folks after the fall plowin's done."

"Eggs-actly!" said Butler, who was evidently thinking of something else. "I suppose you've kind o' cal'c'lated on stayin' here three years more?"

"Well, yes. Fact is, I think I c'n buy the farm this fall, if you'll give me a reasonable show."

"Um-m! What do you call a reasonable show?"

"Wal' say a quarter down and three years' time."

Butler looked at the huge stacks of wheat, which filled the yard, over which the chickens were fluttering and crawling, watching grasshoppers, and out of which the crickets were singing innumera- bly. He smiled in a peculiar way as he said, "Oh, I won't be hard on yeh. But what did you expect to pay f'r the place?"

"Why, about what you offered it for before, two thousand five hundred, or *possibly* three thousand dollars," he added quickly, as he saw the owner shake his head.

"This farm is worth five thousand and five hundred dollars," said Butler, in a careless and decided voice.

"*What!*" almost shrieked the astounded Haskins. "What's

that? Five thousand? Why, that's double what you offered it for three years ago."

"Of course; and it's worth it. It was all run down then; now it's in good shape. You've laid out fifteen hundred dollars in improvements, according to your own story."

"But *you* had nothin' t' do about that. It's my work an' my money."

"You bet it was; but it's my land."

"But what's to pay me for all my——"

"Ain't you had the use of 'em?" replied Butler, smiling calmly into his face.

Haskins was like a man struck on the head with a sand-bag; he couldn't think; he stammered as he tried to say: "But—I never 'd git the use—— You'd rob me! More'n that: you agreed—you promised that I could buy or rent at the end of three years at——"

"That's all right. But I didn't say I'd let you carry off the improvements, nor that I'd go on renting the farm at two-fifty. The land is doubled in value, it don't matter how; it don't enter into the question; an' now you can pay me five hundred dollars a year rent, or take it on your own terms at fifty-five hundred, or—git out."

He was turning away when Haskins, the sweat pouring from his face, fronted him, saying again:

"But *you've* done nothing to make it so. You hain't added a cent. I put it all there myself, expectin' to buy. I worked an' sweat to improve it. I was workin' for myself an' babes——"

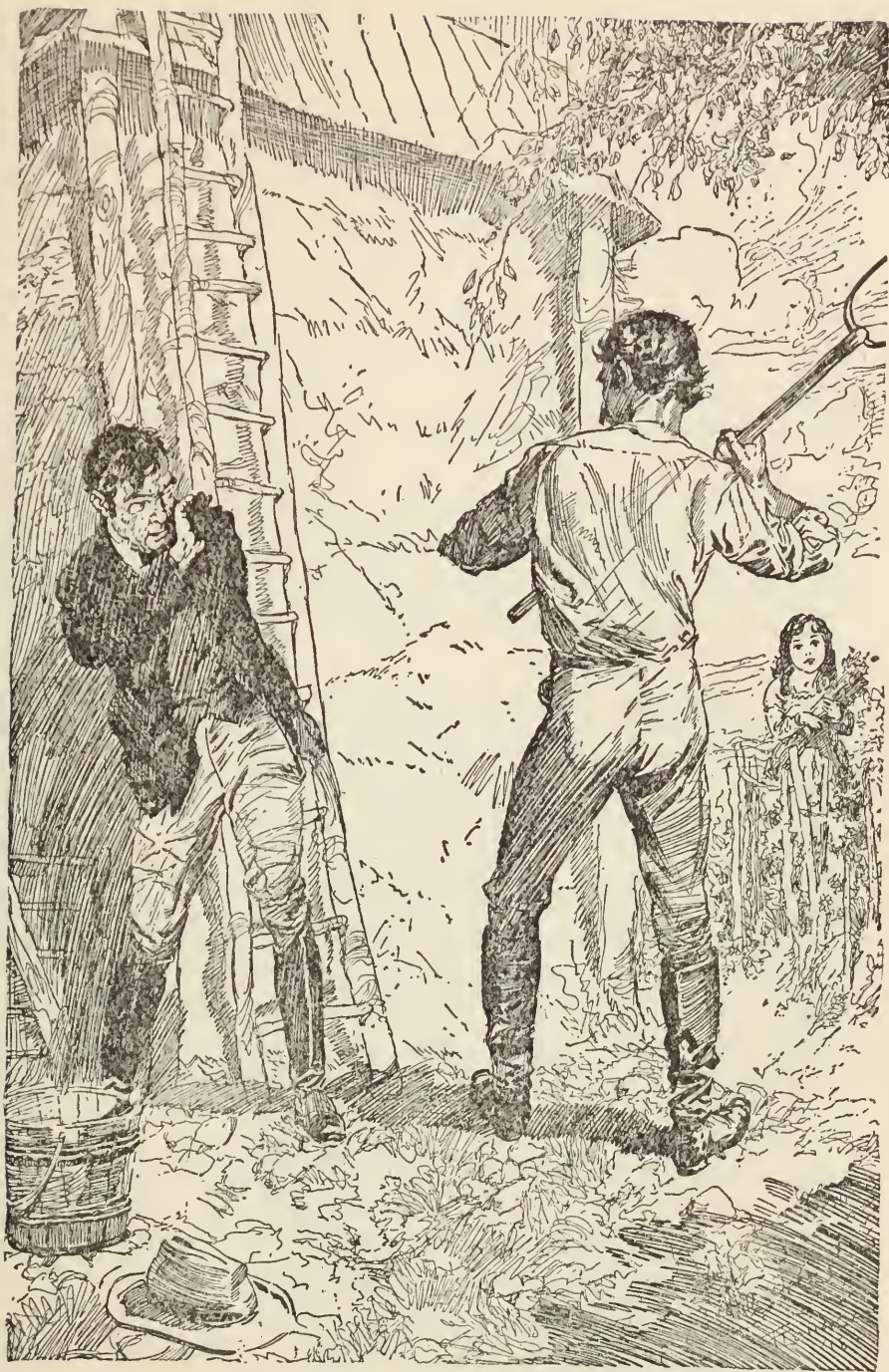
"Well, why didn't you buy when I offered to sell? What y' kickin' about?"

"I'm kickin' about payin' you twice f'r my own things—my own fences, my own kitchen, my own garden."

Butler laughed. "You're too green t' eat, young feller. *Your* improvements! The law will sing another tune."

"But I trusted your word."

"Never trust anybody, my friend. Besides I didn't promise not to do this thing. Why, man, don't look at me like that.



"You'll never rob another man, damn ye!"

UNDER THE LION'S PAW

Don't take me for a thief. It's the law.¹⁴ The reg'lar thing. Everybody does it."

"I don't care if they do. It's stealin' jest the same. You take three thousand dollars of my money—the work o' my hands and my wife's." He broke down at this point. He was not a strong man mentally. He could face hardship, ceaseless toil, but he could not face the cold and sneering face of Butler.

"But I don't take it," said Butler coolly. "All you've got to do is to go on jest as you've been a-doin', or give me a thousand dollars down, and a mortgage at ten per cent, on the rest."

Haskins sat down blindly on a bundle of oats near by, and with staring eyes and drooping head went over the situation. He was under the lion's paw. He felt a horrible numbness in his heart and limbs. He was hid in a mist, and there was no path out.

Butler walked about, looking at the huge stacks of grain, and pulling now and again a few handfuls out, shelling the heads in his hands and blowing the chaff away. He hummed a little tune as he did so. He had an accommodating air of waiting.

Haskins was in the midst of the terrible toil of the last year. He was walking again in the rain and the mud behind his plow; he felt the dust and dirt of the threshing. The ferocious husking-time, with its cutting wind and biting, clinging snows, lay hard upon him. Then he thought of his wife, how she had cheerfully cooked and baked, without holiday and without rest.

"Well, what do you think of it?" inquired the cool, mocking, insinuating voice of Butler.

"I think you're a thief and a liar!" shouted Haskins, leaping up. "A black-hearted houn'!" Butler's smile maddened him; with a sudden leap he caught a fork in his hands, and whirled it in the air. "You'll never rob another man, damn ye!" he grated through his teeth, a look of pitiless ferocity in his accusing eyes.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Butler shrank and quivered, expecting the blow; stood, held hypnotized by the eyes of the man he had a moment before despised—a man transformed into an avenging demon. But in the deadly hush between the lift of the weapon and its fall there came a gush of faint, childish laughter¹⁵ and then across the range of his vision, far away and dim, he saw the sun-bright head of his baby-girl, as, with the pretty tottering run of a two-year-old, she moved across the grass of the doorway. His hands relaxed; the fork fell to the ground; his head lowered.

“Make out y’r deed an’ mor’gage,¹⁶ an’ git off’n my land, an’ don’t ye never cross my line agin; if y’ do, I’ll kill ye.”

Butler backed away from the man in wild haste, and climbing into his buggy with trembling limbs, drove off down the road, leaving Haskins seated dumbly on the sunny pile of sheaves, his head sunk into his hands.¹⁷

HAMLIN GARLAND

"A Son of the Middle Border," as he has called himself, Hamlin Garland was born in 1860, in Green's coulee,* near West Salem, Wisconsin. His earliest memories are of his mother, his sister Harriet, his brother Frank, of his father's coming home from war, and of family reunions at his Grandfather McClintock's. A country boy, he saw barn-raising, threshings, and railsplittings; living near the Mississippi, he saw rafts of laths and shingles made and floated down the river. In the summer he hunted, and in the winter he coasted. From his father, who was a Yankee carpenter, the boy inherited shrewd common-sense; from his mother's family, who were Celtic, lovers of songs and the violin, he received a heritage of imagination and romance. The McClintock strain counted for most in his early career; but his fiction shows that the two influences later combined in his art of realism. Books were few in his home. The Bible, a farmer's "Annual" or two, and a weekly magazine constituted his reading matter until at the age of eight he came across "Beauty and the Beast" and the story of Aladdin.

When he was nine years of age, his father moved to Iowa, to a farm the memories of which "are of the fibers of poetry." There his sister Jessie was born. Shortly, the family continued to Mitchell County, Minnesota, "the middle border." Here at ten years of age, Hamlin drove a plow and turned over his two acres a day. In spite of cold and blizzards, he managed to go back and forth to school, where he studied McGuffey's Readers and became acquainted, through them, with selections from classic literature. Mr. Garland has likewise recorded that he devoured dime novels, literally by the hundreds. But it is well to observe that he counteracted their

* Spelled also "cooley." A deep gulch, or water channel, dry for the most part, and having sides that slope.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

effect by a conscientious reading of "Paradise Lost," which his mother had given to him. The youthful reader "got considerable joy out of his [Milton's] cursing passages." He also read "The Hoosier Schoolmaster," which was appearing in a series of installments, and later had the pleasure of telling Mr. Eggleston that it had proved a milestone in his literary progress. "Scottish Chiefs" and "Ivanhoe" preceded Franklin's "Autobiography" and "The Life of P. T. Barnum."

Besides the pleasure he found in the world opened up to him by this motley array of reading matter, he also formed a fast friendship with a boy who seems to have been a singularly upright model. "Burton" made, for example, a vow not to use a profane word. And Mr. Garland testifies that in thirty years he never broke his vow.

In 1874, Harriet the older sister of the author, died, and shortly afterward the family moved to "town," the village of Osage. The most significant occurrence there contributory to the boy's development was, perhaps, his hearing the sermon of a Methodist preacher, who spoke on the power of art. The young man resolved to be a student of the beautiful. He also became interested in public speaking and declaimed the orations which every school-boy loves. After his father and the family returned to the country, Hamlin took lodgings and continued his course at Cedar Valley seminary. About this time he fell under the spell of Hawthorne, whose "Mosses from an Old Manse" unexpectedly came his way. Shortly, too, he read Joaquin Miller and then Mr. William Dean Howells' "Undiscovered Country." But he was not, as yet, fitted to evaluate or appreciate the realism of Mr. Howells.

Hamlin's father, by nature a pioneer, was always pushing farther West. So it was that in 1880 he took up a homestead in Brown County, South Dakota. Hamlin finished his course at the seminary, and having decided to teach, visited his early home. He lacked money at this period and has remarked quite frankly that he subsisted four days on five cents worth of buns. Having heard Edwin Booth's "Hamlet," another milestone in his career, he decided to see New England. He and

his brother Frank, with fifty dollars between them, set out by way of Chicago. They visited Boston and its environs, and after a trip to Mount Washington, continued to New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D. C.

After his return to the West, young Garland taught school at fifty dollars a month. Having saved his salary, and taken out a claim, he might have settled in the West; but he was, after all, a Grandson of New England, and becoming interested in social questions, he went back East to study and read. He lived cheaply, too cheaply, in Boston, but if his body was poorly fed it was not so with his mind. He increased his mental stature mightily in those days. He read the scientists, Darwin, Spencer and Huxley; he read early English poetry; he read recent American poetry. And he heard, night after night, Booth speaking the lines of Shakespeare. Finally, he secured an instructorship in English literature in a school in Boston.

Now that he was fairly started upon a professional career he found time to write. One of his first stories was suggested by a grocery store character whom he met in Waltham. It is also interesting to know that the scraping of a coal shovel in the city streets recalled the scrape of farm shovels in Iowa, and that he produced, from the recollection, a typical corn-husking scene. On a visit to Osage in 1887 he determined to fictionize the Middle West as it had not been done. He saw that he could do for it what Miss Wilkins had done for New England, what Mr. Howells was doing for America. His first stories, most of which had been accepted by the *Arena*, were gathered into a volume and published in 1891. Since the appearance of "Main Travelled Roads" there has been no doubt that Mr. Garland is the chief interpreter of the middle border in the early pioneer days. The hardships rather than the happiness of those days he handles with unflinching realism and adherence to representative truth. Later collections which the student should read are "Other Main Travelled Roads" and "Prairie Folks."

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Mr. Garland was married in 1899 to Miss Zulima Taft. He lives for the most part in or near New York City.

In connection with "Under the Lion's Paw," read:

- "A Taste of Honey" (In "A Humble Romance"), by Mary Wilkins Freeman.
- "Farmer Finch" (In "A White Heron"), by Sarah Orne Jewett.
- "Belles Demoiselles Plantation" (In "Old Creole Days"), by George W. Cable.
- "The Dancin' Party at Harrison Cove" (In "In the Tennessee Mountains"), by Charles Egbert Craddock.
- "The Malefactor" (In "Stories of Russian Life," translated by Marian Fell), by Anton Tchekoff.

PROPERTY OF
DAVIS

ON THE STAIRS

BY ARTHUR MORRISON

The house had been "genteel." When trade was prospering in the East End, and the ship-fitter or block-maker thought it no shame to live in the parish where his workshop lay, such a master had lived here. Now, it was a tall, solid, well-bricked, ugly house, grimy and paintless in the joinery, cracked and patched in the windows, where the front door stood open all day long; and the womankind sat on the steps, talking of sickness and deaths and the cost of things; and treacherous holes lurked in the carpet or road-soil on the stairs and in the passage. For when eight families live in a house, nobody buys a door-mat, and the street was one of those streets that are always muddy. It smelt, too, of many things, none of them pleasant (one was fried fish); but for all that it was not a slum.¹

Three flights up,² a gaunt woman with bare forearms stayed on her way to listen at a door which, opening, let out a warm, fetid waft from a close sick-room. A bent and tottering old woman stood on the threshold, holding the door behind her.³

"An' is 'e no better now, Mrs. Curtis?" the gaunt woman asked, with a nod at the opening.

The old woman shook her head, and pulled the door closer. Her jaw waggled loosely in her withered chaps: ⁴ "Nor won't be, till 'e's gone." Then after a certain pause, "'E's goin'," she said.

"Don't doctor give no 'ope?"

"'Lor' bless ye, I don't want to ast no doctors," Mrs. Curtis lied, with something not unlike a chuckle. "I've seed too many on 'em. The boy's a-goin', fast; I can see that. An' 'e's a—" she gave the handle another tug, and whispered—"he's

been called." She nodded again. "Three seprit knocks at the bed-head las' night; an' I know what *that* means!"⁵

The gaunt woman raised her brows, and nodded. "Ah, well," she said, "we all on us comes to it some day, sooner or later. An' it's often a 'appy release."

The two looked into space beyond each other, the elder with a nod and a croak. Presently the other pursued, "'E's been a very good son, ain't 'e?"

— "Ay, ay,—well enough son to me," responded the old woman, a little peevishly; ⁶ "an' I'll 'ave 'im put away decent,⁷ though there's on'y the Union for me after. I can do that, thank Gawd!" she added, meditatively, as chin on fist she stared into the thickening dark over the stairs.

"When I lost my pore 'usband," said the gaunt woman, with a certain brightening,⁸ "I give 'im a 'andsome funeral. 'E was a Odd Feller, an' I got twelve pound. I 'ad a oak caufin an' a open 'earse. There was a kerridge for the fam'ly an' one for 'is mates—two 'orses each, an' feathers, an' mutes; an' it went the furthest way round⁹ to the cimity. 'Wotever 'appens, Mrs. Manders,' says the undertaker, 'you'll feel as you've treated 'im proper; nobody can't reproach you over that.' An' they couldn't. 'E was a good 'usband to me, an' I buried 'im respectable."

The gaunt woman exulted. The old, old story¹⁰ of Manders's funeral fell upon the other one's ears with a freshened interest, and she mumbled her gums ruminantly. "Bob'll 'ave a 'ansome buryin', too," she said. "I can make it up, with the insurance money, an' this, an' that. On'y I dunno about mutes.¹¹ It's a expense."

In the East End, when a woman has not enough money to buy a thing much desired, she does not say so in plain words; she says the thing is an "expense," or a "great expense." It means the same thing, but it sounds better. Mrs. Curtis had reckoned her resources, and found that mutes would be an "expense." At a cheap funeral mutes cost half-a-sovereign and their liquor. Mrs. Manders said as much.

"Yus, yus, 'arf-a-sovereign," the old woman assented. With

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

ON THE STAIRS

in, the sick man feebly beat the floor with a stick.¹² "I'm a-comin'," she cried shrilly; "yus, 'arf-a-sovereign, but it's a lot, an' I don't see 'ow I'm to do it—not at present." She reached for the door-handle again, but stopped and added, by after-thought, "Unless I don't 'ave no ploom's."

"It 'ud be a pity not to 'ave ploom's. I 'ad——"

There were footsteps on the stairs, then a stumble and a testy word.¹³ Mrs. Curtis peered over into the gathering dark. "Is it the doctor, sir?" she asked. It was the doctor's assistant; and Mrs. Manders tramped up to the next landing as the door of the sick-room took him in.¹⁴

For five minutes the stairs were darker than ever. Then the assistant, a very young man, came out again, followed by the old woman with a candle.¹⁵ Mrs. Manders listened in the upper dark. "He's sinking fast," said the assistant. "He *must* have a stimulant. Dr. Mansell ordered port wine. Where is it?" Mrs. Curtis mumbled dolorously. "I tell you he *must* have it," he averred with unprofessional emphasis (his qualification was only a month old). "The man can't take solid food, and his strength must be kept up somehow. Another day may make all the difference. Is it because you can't afford it?" "It's a expense—sich a expense, doctor," the old woman pleaded. "An' wot with 'arf-pints o' milk an'——" She grew inarticulate, and mumbled dismally.

"But he must have it, Mrs. Curtis, if it's your last shilling; it's the only way. If you mean you absolutely haven't the money——" And he paused a little awkwardly. He was not a wealthy young man—wealthy young men do not devil for East End doctors—but he was conscious of a certain haul of sixpences at nap the night before; and, being inexperienced, he did not foresee the career of persecution whereon he was entering at his own expense and of his own motion. He produced five shillings.¹⁶ "If you absolutely haven't the money, why—take this and get a bottle—good; not at a public-house. But mind, *at once*. He should have had it before." It would have interested him, as a matter of coincidence,

to know that his principal had been guilty of the self-same indiscretion—even the amount was identical—on that landing the day before. But, as Mrs. Curtis said nothing of this, he floundered down the stair and out into the wetter mud, pondering whether or not the beloved son of a Congregational minister might take full credit for a deed of charity on the proceeds of six-penny nap.¹⁷ But Mrs. Curtis puffed her wrinkles, and shook her head sagaciously as she carried in her candle. From the room came a clink of money falling into a tea-pot. And Mrs. Manders went about her business.

The door was shut, and the stair a pit of blackness.¹⁹ Twice a lodger passed down, and up and down, and still it did not open. Men and women walked on the lower flights, and on at the door, and in again. From the street a shout or a snarl of laughter floated up the pit. On the pavement footsteps rang crisper and fewer, and from the bottom passages there were sounds of stagger and sprawl. A demented old clock buzzed divers hours at random, and was rebuked every twenty minutes by the regular tread of a policeman on his beat. Finally, somebody shut the street-door with a great bang, and the street was muffled. A key turned inside the door on the landing, but that was all. A feeble light shone for hours along the crack below, and then went out. The crazy old clock went buzzing on, but nothing left that room all night. Nothing that opened the door. . . .

When next the key turned, it was to Mrs. Manders' knock in the full morning; and soon the two women came out on the landing together, Mrs. Curtis with a shapeless clump of bonnet.²⁰ "Ah, 'e's a lovely corpse," said Mrs. Manders. "Like wax. So was my 'usband."

"I must be stirrin'," croaked the old woman, "an' go about the insurance an' the measurin' an' that. There's lots to do."

"Ah, there is. 'Oo are you goin' to 'ave—Wilkins? I 'ave Wilkins. Better than Kedge, I think. Kedge's mutes dress rusty, an' their trouser is frayed. If you was thinkin' 'avin' mutes——"

ON THE STAIRS

"Yus, yus,"—with a palsied nodding—"I'm agoin' to 'ave utes. I can do it respectable, thank Gawd!"

"And the ploods?"

"Ay, yus, and the ploods too. They ain't sich a great xpense, after all." ²¹

ARTHUR MORRISON

Arthur Morrison, novelist, dramatist and writer on Oriental subjects, was born in Kent, on the first day of November, 1863. After a short time in the civil service, Mr. Morrison entered journalism about the year 1890.

In his work on *The National Observer*, Mr. Morrison was connected with W. E. Henley, the genius more frequently associated with the name of Robert Louis Stevenson. Henley was keenly interested in the work of the young man,—Henley was a notable “discoverer”—and recognized in his studies and stories of the London East-End a new realism. Descriptions at once correct and cynical or pessimistic flowed from his pen; yet none the less he viewed people and scenes with his own eyes and temperament.

Acting on Henley's advice he published (1894) the volume, “Tales of Mean Streets.” The brutal and sordid lives of his men and women, the meanness and filth of the degraded conditions of those lives, all shocked readers who first came into knowledge of the book. Mr. Morrison was looked on, in some higher planes of social life, as an exploiter of hooliganism, a romancer of low places. The discerning, however, appreciated what they believed to be verisimilitude and representative truth. Then *The East London Chronicle*, a church paper, vouched for the exactitude of the descriptions, and henceforth it was understood, gradually, that the author had constituted himself historian and painter of the East End. Succeeding his adventures in realism, it may be added parenthetically, is the work of such writers as A. Neil Lyon (“Sixpenny Pieces,” etc.) and Thomas Burke (“Limehouse Nights”).

Following the “Tales,” appeared “A Child of the Jago,” a work of not quite two hundred pages, which has been com-

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

pared with "Oliver Twist" and has laid the author open to the charge that he suffers from too much Dickens influence. But few writing of realism, the realism of poverty, escape a similar criticism.

Other volumes are "The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt" (1895), with its sequels; "The Hole in the Wall" (1902); "The Red Triangle" (1903); "Green Ginger" (1909), and perhaps the best plotted of all his detective stories, "The Green Diamond" (1904). "Cunning Murrell" (1900) is a story having its scene in Essex and detailing the practices of a wizard—Cunning, himself. Though the time is as late as the years 1854-1860, it would appear to the more enlightened reader to be the Dark Ages. Yet, again, the features are essentially true to the life of the time mentioned. In this work, the author touches practices of witchcraft, such as are described also by Thomas Hardy.

Besides his depicting of East End life, his clever construction of detective story plots, and his success in reflecting the wizardry of the nineteenth century in Essex, Mr. Morrison has a connoisseur's love for objects of art, particularly those from China and Japan. He made the collection of paintings by Chinese and Japanese old masters now in the British Museum.

Despite his increasing range and the dramatization of a few stories, Mr. Morrison has not become widely popular. His detective stories and his growth in humor have extended his vogue; but it is probable that his best work is in the ugly realism esteemed by a comparative few. He lives at High Beech, in Essex.

Tales of "Mean Streets" by other writers:

"Arthur's" (A collection), by A. Neil Lyon; "Sixpenny Pieces" (Collection by the same author).

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"Limehouse Nights" (Collection), by Thomas Burke.

Other stories by Mr. Morrison:

- "The Absent Three," "The Copper Charm," "Dobb's Parrot,"
"Mr. Bostock's Backsliding," "A Seller of Hate" (In
"Green Ginger").
- "The Case of the Missing Hand," "The Halford Will Case,"
"The Ivy Cottage Mystery," "The Micobar Bullion
Case" (In "The Chronicles of Martin Hewitt").
- "Lizerunt," "That Brute Simmons," "Without Visible Means"
(In "Tales of Mean Streets").
- "The Affair of Samuel's Diamonds," "The Case of Mr. Jacob
Mason," "The Case of the Lever Key" (In "The
Red Triangle").

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER *

BY O. HENRY

The most disreputable thing in Yancey Goree's law office was Goree himself, sprawled in his creaky old arm-chair. The rickety little office, built of red brick, was set flush with the street—the main street of the town of Bethel.¹

Bethel rested upon the foot-hills of the Blue Ridge. Above it the mountains were piled to the sky. Far below it the turbid Catawba gleamed yellow along its disconsolate valley.

The June day was at its sultriest hour. Bethel dozed in the tepid shade. Trade was not. It was so still that Goree, reclining in his chair, distinctly heard the clicking of the chips in the grand-jury room, where the "courthouse gang" was playing poker. From the open back door of the office a well-worn path meandered across the grassy lot to the courthouse. The treading out of that path had cost Goree all he ever had—first inheritance of a few thousand dollars, next the old family home, and latterly the last shreds of his self-respect and manhood. The "gang" had cleaned him out. The broken gambler had turned drunkard and parasite; he had lived to see this day come when the men who had stripped him denied him a seat at the game. His word was no longer to be taken. The daily bout at cards had arranged itself accordingly, and to him was assigned the ignoble part of the onlooker. The sheriff, the county clerk, a sportive deputy, a gay attorney, and a chalk-faced man hailing "from the valley," sat at table, and the sheared one was thus tacitly advised to go and grow more wool.

Soon wearying of his ostracism, Goree had departed for his office, muttering to himself as he unsteadily traversed the unlucky pathway. After a drink of corn whiskey from a

* Copyright, 1910, by Doubleday, Page and Company.

demijohn under the table, he had flung himself into the chair, staring, in a sort of maudlin apathy, out at the mountains immersed in the summer haze.² The little white patch he saw away up on the side of Blackjack was Laurel, the village near which he had been born and bred. There, also, was the birth-place of the feud between the Gorees and the Coltranes. Now no direct heir of the Gorees survived except this plucked and singed bird of misfortune. To the Coltranes, also, but one male supporter was left—Colonel Abner Coltrane, a man of substance and standing, a member of the State Legislature, and a contemporary with Goree's father. The feud had been a typical one of the region; it had left a red record of hate, wrong and slaughter.³

But Yancey Goree was not thinking of feuds. His befuddled brain was hopelessly attacking the problem of the future maintenance of himself and his favorite follies. Of late, old friends of the family had seen to it that he had whereof to eat and a place to sleep, but whiskey they would not buy for him, and he must have whiskey. His law business was extinct; no case had been intrusted to him in two years. He had been a borrower and a sponge, and it seemed that if he fell no lower it would be from lack of opportunity. One more chance—he was saying to himself—if he had one more stake at the game, he thought he could win; but he had nothing left to sell, and his credit was more than exhausted.

He could not help smiling, even in his misery, as he thought of the man to whom, six months before, he had sold the old Goree homestead.⁴ There had come from "back yan'" in the mountains two of the strangest creatures, a man named Pike Garvey and his wife. "Back yan'," with a wave of the hand toward the hills, was understood among the mountaineers to designate the remotest fastnesses, the unplumbed gorges, the haunts of lawbreakers, the wolf's den, and the boudoir of the bear. In the cabin far up on Blackjack's shoulder, in the wildest part of these retreats, this odd couple had lived for twenty years. They had neither dog nor children to mitigate the heavy silence of the hills. Pike Garvey was little known

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

in the settlements, but all who had dealt with him pronounced him "crazy as a loon." He acknowledged no occupation save that of a squirrel hunter, but he "moonshined" occasionally by way of diversion. Once the "revenues" had dragged him from his lair, fighting silently and desperately like a terrier, and he had been sent to state's prison for two years. Released, he popped back into his hole like an angry weasel.⁵

Fortune, passing over many anxious wooers, made a freakish flight into Blackjack's bosky pockets to smile upon Pike and his faithful partner.

One day a party of spectacled, knickerbockered, and altogether absurd prospectors invaded the vicinity of the Garvey's cabin. Pike lifted his squirrel rifle off the hooks and took a shot at them⁶ at long range on the chance of their being revenues. Happily he missed, and the unconscious agents of good luck drew nearer, disclosing their innocence of anything resembling law or justice. Later on, they offered the Garveys an enormous quantity of ready, green, crisp money for their thirty-acre patch of cleared land, mentioning, as an excuse for such a mad action, some irrelevant and inadequate nonsense about a bed of mica underlying the said property.

When the Garveys became possessed of so many dollars that they faltered in computing them, the deficiencies of life on Blackjack began to grow prominent. Pike began to talk of new shoes, a hogshead of tobacco to set in the corner, a new lock to his rifle; and, leading Martella to a certain spot on the mountain-side, he pointed out to her how a small cannon—doubtless a thing not beyond the scope of their fortune in price—might be planted so as to command and defend the sole accessible trail to the cabin, to the confusion of revenues and meddling strangers forever.

But Adam reckoned without his Eve. These things represented to him the applied power of wealth, but there slumbered in his dingy cabin an ambition that soared far above his primitive wants. Somewhere in Mrs. Garvey's bosom still survived a spot of femininity unstarved by twenty years of Blackjack. For so long a time the sounds in her ears had

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

been the scaly-barks dropping in the woods at noon, and the wolves singing among the rocks at night, and it was enough to have purged her of vanities. She had grown fat and sad and yellow and dull. But when the means came, she felt a re-kindled desire to assume the perquisites of her sex—to sit at tea tables; to buy inutile things; to whitewash the hideous veracity of life with a little form and ceremony. So she coldly vetoed Pike's proposed system of fortifications, and announced that they would descend upon the world, and gyrate socially.

And thus, at length, it was decided, and the thing done. The village of Laurel was their compromise between Mrs. Garvey's preference for one of the large valley towns and Pike's hankering for primeval solitudes. Laurel yielded a halting round of feeble social distractions comfortable with Martella's ambitions, and was not entirely without recommendation to Pike, its contiguity to the mountains presenting advantages for sudden retreat in case fashionable society should make it advisable.

Their descent upon Laurel had been coincident with Yancey Goree's feverish desire to convert property into cash, and they bought the old Goree homestead, paying four thousand dollars ready money into the spendthrift's shaking hands.

Thus it happened that while the disreputable last of the Gorees sprawled in his disreputable office, at the end of his row, spurned by the cronies whom he had gorged, strangers dwelt in the halls of his fathers.⁷

A cloud of dust⁸ was rolling slowly up the parched street, with something traveling in the midst of it. A little breeze wafted the cloud to one side, and a new, brightly painted carryall, drawn by a slothful gray horse, became visible. The vehicle deflected from the middle of the street as it neared Goree's office, and stopped in the gutter directly in front of his door.

On the front seat sat a gaunt, tall man, dressed in black broadcloth, his rigid hands incarcerated in yellow kid gloves. On the back seat was a lady who triumphed over the June heat.

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

Her stout form was armored in a skin-tight silk dress of the description known as "changeable," being a gorgeous combination of shifting hues. She sat erect, waving a much-ornamented fan, with her eyes fixed stonily far down the street. However, Martella Garvey's heart might be rejoicing at the pleasures of her new life, Blackjack had done his work with her exterior. He had carved her countenance to the image of emptiness and inanity; had imbued her with the stolidity of his crags, and the reserve of his hushed interiors. She always seemed to hear, whatever her surroundings were, the scaly-barks falling and pattering down the mountainside. She could always hear the awful silence of Blackjack sounding through the stillest of nights.⁹

Goree watched this solemn equipage, as it drove to his door, with only faint interest; but when the lank driver wrapped the reins about his whip, awkwardly descended, and stepped into the office, he rose unsteadily to receive him, recognizing Pike Garvey, the new, the transformed, the recently civilized.

The mountaineer took the chair Goree offered him. They who cast doubts upon Garvey's soundness of mind had a strong witness in the man's countenance.¹⁰ His face was too long, a dull saffron in hue, and immobile as a statue's. Pale-blue, unwinking round eyes without lashes added to the singularity of his gruesome visage. Goree was at a loss to account for the visit.

"Everything all right at Laurel, Mr. Garvey?" he inquired.

"Everything all right, sir, and mighty pleased is Missis Garvey and me with the property.¹¹ Missis Garvey likes yo' place, and she likes the neighborhood. Society is what she flows she wants, and she is gettin' of it. The Rogerses, the Hapgoods, the Pratts, and the Troys hev been to see Missis Garvey, and she hev et meals to most of thar houses. The best folks hev axed her to differ'nt kinds of doin's. I cya'n't say, Mr. Goree, that sech things suit me—fur me, give me them thar." Garvey's huge, yellow-gloved hand flourished in the direction of the mountains. "That's whar I b'long, 'mongst the wild honey bees and the b'ars. But that ain't what I come

fur to say, Mr. Goree. Thar's somethin' you got what me and Missis Garvey wants to buy." ¹²

"Buy!" echoed Goree. "From me?" Then he laughed harshly. "I reckon you are mistaken about that. I reckon you are mistaken about that. I sold out to you, as you yourself expressed it, 'lock, stock and barrel.' There isn't even a ramrod left to sell."

"You've got it, and we 'uns want it. 'Take the money,' says Missis Garvey, 'and buy it fa'r and squar'.'"

Goree shook his head. "The cupboard's bare," he said.

"We've riz," pursued the mountaineer, undeflected from his object, "a heap. We was pore as possums, and now we could hev folks to dinner every day. We been reco'nized, Missis Garvey says, by the best society. But there's somethin' we need we ain't got. She says it ought to been put in the 'ventory ov the sale, but it tain't thar. 'Take the money, then,' says she, 'and buy it fa'r and squar'.'"

"Out with it," said Goree, his racked nerves growing impatient.

Garvey threw his slouch hat upon the table, and leaned forward, fixing his unblinking eyes upon Goree's.

"There's a old feud," he said distinctly and slowly, "'tween you'uns and the Coltranes."

Goree frowned ominously. To speak of his feud to a feudist is a serious breach of the mountain etiquette. The man from "back yan'" knew it as well as the lawyer did.

"Na offense," he went on, "but purely in the way of business. Missis Garvey hev studied all about feuds. Most of the quality folks in the mountains hev 'em. The Settles and the Goforths, the Rankins and the Boyds, the Silers and the Galloways, hev all been cyarin' on feuds f'om twenty to a hundred year. The last man to drap was when yo' uncle, Jedge Paisley Goree, 'journd co't and shot Len Coltrane f'om the bench. Missis Garvey and me, we come f'om the po' white trash. Nobody wouldn't pick a feud with we'uns, no mo'n with a family of tree-toads. Quality people everywhar, says Missis Garvey, has feuds. We'uns ain't quality, but

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

we're buyin' into it as fur as we can. 'Take the money, then,' says Missis Garvey, 'and buy Mr. Goree's feud, fa'r and squar'.' "

The squirrel hunter straightened a leg half across the room, drew a roll of bills from his pocket, and threw them on the table.

"Thar's two hundred dollars,¹³ Mr. Goree; what you would call a fa'r price for a feud that's been 'lowed to run down like yourn hev. Thar's only you left to cyar' on yo' side of it, and you'd make mighty po' killin'. I'll take it off yo' hands, and it'll set me and Missis Garvey up among the quality. Thar's the money."

The little roll of currency on the table slowly untwisted itself, writhing and jumping as its folds relaxed. In the silence that followed Garvey's last speech the rattling of the poker chips in the courthouse could be plainly heard.¹⁴ Goree knew that the sheriff had just won a pot, for the subdued whoop with which he always greeted a victory floated across the square upon the crinkly heat waves. Beads of moisture¹⁵ stood on Goree's brow. Stooping, he drew the wicker-covered demijohn from under the table, and filled a tumbler from it.

"A little corn liquor, Mr. Garvey? Of course you are joking about—what you spoke of? Opens quite a new market, doesn't it? Feuds, prime, two-fifty to three. Feuds, slightly damaged—two hundred, I believe you said, Mr. Garvey?"

Goree laughed self-consciously.

The mountaineer took the glass Goree handed him, and drank the whiskey without a tremor of the lids of his staring eyes. The lawyer applauded the feat by a look of envious admiration. He poured his own drink, and took it like a drunkard,¹⁶ by gulps, and with shudders at the smell and taste.

"Two hundred," repeated Garvey. "Thar's the money."

A sudden passion flared up in Goree's brain. He struck the table with his fist. One of the bills flipped over and

touched his hand. He flinched as if something had stung him.

"Do you come to me," he shouted, "seriously with such a ridiculous, insulting, darned-fool proposition?"¹⁷

"It's fa'r and squar'," said the squirrel hunter, but he reached out his hand as if to take back the money; and then Goree knew that his own flurry of rage had not been from pride or resentment, but from anger at himself, knowing that he would set foot in the deeper depths that were being opened to him. He turned in an instant from an outraged gentleman to an anxious chafferer recommending his goods.

"Don't be in a hurry,¹⁸ Garvey," he said, his face crimson and his speech thick. "I accept your p-p-proposition, though it's dirt cheap at two hundred. A t-trade's all right when both p-purchaser and b-buyer are s-satisfied. Shall I wrap it up for you, Mr. Garvey?"

Garvey rose, and shook out his broadcloth. "Missis Garvey will be pleased. You air out of it, and it stands Coltrane and Garvey. Just a scrap ov writin', Mr. Goree, you bein' a lawyer, to show we traded."

Goree seized a sheet of paper and a pen. The money was clutched in his moist hand. Everything else suddenly seemed to grow trivial and light.

"Bill of sale, by all means. 'Right, title and interest in and to' . . . 'forever warrant and——' No, Garvey, we'll have to leave out that 'defend,'" said Goree with a loud laugh. "You'll have to defend this title yourself."

The mountaineer received the amazing screed that the lawyer handed him, folded it with immense labor, and placed it carefully in his pocket.¹⁹

Goree was standing near the window. "Step here," he said, raising his finger, "and I'll show you your recently purchased enemy."²⁰ There he goes, down the other side of the street."

The mountaineer crooked his long frame to look through the window in the direction indicated by the other. Colonel Abner Coltrane,²¹ an erect, portly gentleman of about fifty, wearing the inevitable long, double-breasted frock coat of the

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

thern law-maker, and an old high silk hat, was passing on opposite sidewalk. As Garvey looked, Goree glanced at face. If there be such a thing as a yellow wolf, here was counterpart. Garvey snarled as his unhuman eyes followed moving figure, disclosing long, amber-colored fangs.

Is that him? Why, that's the man who sent me to the 'tentiary once!"²²

He used to be district attorney," said Goree carelessly. And, by the way, he's a first-class shot."

I kin hit a squirrel's eye at a hundred yards," said Garvey. So that's that Coltrane! I made a better trade than I was makin'. I'll take keer ov this feud, Mr. Goree, better'n you'r did!"²³

He moved toward the door, but lingered there, betraying a slight perplexity.

'Anything else to-day?" inquired Goree with frothy sarcasm. "Any family traditions, ancestral ghosts, or skeletons in the closet? Prices as low as the lowest."

Thar was another thing," replied the unmoved squirrel hunter, "that Missis Garvey was thinkin' of. 'Tain't so much my line as t'other, but she wanted partic'lar that I should acquire, and ef you was willin', 'pay fur it,' she says, 'fa'r and fair.' Thar's a buryin' groun', as you know, Mr. Goree, in the yard of yo' old place, under the cedars. Them that lies'r is yo' folks what was killed by the Coltranes. The monyments has the names on 'em. Missis Garvey says a fam'ly buryin' groun' is a sho' sign of quality. She says ef we git the feud, thar's somethin' else ought to go with it. The names on them monyments is 'Goree,' but they can be changed to any by——"

Go! Go!" screamed Goree,²⁴ his face turning purple. He stretched out both hands toward the mountaineer, his fingers locked and shaking. "Go, you ghoul! Even a Ch-Chinaman respects the g-graves of his ancestors—go!"

The squirrel hunter slouched out of the door to his carryall. While he was climbing over the wheel Goree was collecting, with feverish celerity, the money that had fallen from his hand

to the floor. As the vehicle slowly turned about, the sheep with a coat of newly grown wool, was hurrying, in indecent haste, along the path to the courthouse.²⁵

At three o'clock in the morning²⁶ they brought him back to his office, shorn and unconscious. The sheriff, the sporty deputy, the county clerk, and the gay attorney carried him the chalk-faced man "from the valley" acting as escort.

"On the table," said one of them, and they deposited him there among the litter of his unprofitable books and papers.

"Yance thinks a lot of a pair of deuces when he's liquored up," sighed the sheriff reflectively.

"Too much," said the gay attorney. "A man has no business to play poker who drinks as much as he does. I wonder how much he dropped to-night."

"Close to two hundred. What I wonder is whar he got in. Yance ain't had a cent fur over a month, I know."

"Struck a client, maybe. Well, let's get home before daylight. He'll be all right when he wakes up, except for a sore of beehive about the cranium."

The gang slipped away through the early morning twilight. The next eye to gaze upon the miserable Goree was the one of day. He peered through the uncurtained window, first deluging the sleeper in a flood of faint gold, but soon pouring upon the mottled red of his flesh a searching, white, summery heat. Goree stirred, half unconsciously, among the table débris, and turned his face from the window. His movement dislodged a heavy law book, which crashed upon the floor. Opening his eyes, he saw, bending over him, a man in a well-worn silk hat, and beneath it the kindly, smooth face of Colonel Abner Coltrane.²⁷

A little uncertain of the outcome, the colonel waited for a moment other to make some sign of recognition. Not in twenty years had male members of these two families faced each other in peace. Goree's eyelids puckered as he strained his blurred sight toward this visitor, and then he smiled serenely.

"Have you brought Stella and Lucy over to play?" he said calmly.

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

"Do you know me, Yancey?" asked Coltrane.

"Of course I do. You brought me a whip with a whistle in the end."

So he had—twenty-four years ago; when Yancey's father was his best friend.

Goree's eyes wandered about the room. The colonel understood. "Lie still, and I'll bring you some," said he. There was a pump in the yard at the rear, and Goree closed his eyes, listening with rapture to the click of its handle, and the bubbling of the falling stream. Coltrane brought a pitcher of the cool water, and held it for him to drink.²⁸ Presently Goree sat up—a most forlorn object, his summer suit of flax soiled and crumpled, his discreditable head tousled and unsteady. He tried to wave one of his hands toward the colonel.

"Ex-excuse—everything, will you?" he said. "I must have drunk too much whiskey last night, and gone to bed on the table." His brows knitted into a puzzled frown.

"Out with the boys a while?" asked Coltrane kindly.

"No, I went nowhere. I haven't had a dollar to spend in the last two months. Struck the demijohn too often, I reckon, as usual."²⁹

Colonel Coltrane touched him on the shoulder.

"A little while ago, Yancey," he began, "you asked me if I had brought Stella and Lucy over to play. You weren't quite awake then, and must have been dreaming you were a boy again. You are awake now, and I want you to listen to me. I have come from Stella and Lucy to their old playmate, and to my old friend's son. They know that I am going to bring you home with me, and you will find them as ready with a welcome as they were in the old days. I want you to come to my house and stay until you are yourself again, and as much longer as you will. We heard of your being down in the world, and in the midst of temptation, and we agreed that you should come over and play at our house once more. Will you come, my boy? Will you drop our old family trouble and come with me?"³⁰

"Trouble!" said Goree, opening his eyes wide. "There was

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

never any trouble between us that I know of. I'm sure we've always been the best of friends.³¹ But, good Lord, Colone how could I go to your home as I am—a drunken wretch, miserable, degraded spendthrift and gambler——”

He lurched from the table into his armchair, and began to weep maudlin tears, mingled with genuine drops of remorse and shame.³² Coltrane talked to him persistently and reasonably, reminding him of the simple mountain pleasures of which he had once been so fond, and insisting upon the genuineness of the invitation.

Finally he landed Goree by telling him he was counting upon his help in the engineering and transportation of a large amount of felled timber from a high mountainside to a waterway. He knew that Goree had once invented a device for that purpose—a series of slides and chutes—upon which he had justly prided himself. In an instant the poor fellow, delighted at the idea of his being of use to anyone, had paper spread upon the table, and was drawing rapid but pitifully shaky lines in demonstration of what he could and would do.

The man was sickened of the husks; his prodigal heart was turning again toward the mountains. His mind was strangely clogged, and his thoughts and memories were turning to his brain one by one,³³ like carrier pigeons over a stormy sea. But Coltrane was satisfied with the progress he had made.

Bethel received the surprise of its existence that afternoon when a Coltrane and a Goree rode amicably together through the town. Side by side they rode, out from the dusty street and gaping townspeople, down across the creek bridge, and toward the mountain.³⁴ The prodigal had brushed and washed and combed himself to a more decent figure, but he was steady in the saddle, and he seemed to be deep in the contemplation of some vexing problem. Coltrane left him in that mood, relying upon the influence of changed surroundings to restore his equilibrium.

Once Goree was seized with a shaking fit, and almost came to a collapse. He had to dismount and rest at the side of the

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

bad. The colonel, foreseeing such a condition, had provided a small flask of whiskey for the journey but when it was offered to him Goree refused it almost with violence, declaring he would never touch it again. By and by he was recovered, and went quietly enough for a mile or two. Then he pulled up his horse suddenly, and said,

"I lost two hundred dollars last night, playing poker. Now, where did I get that money?"³⁵

"Take it easy, Yancey. The mountain air will soon clear you up. We'll go fishing, first thing, at the Pinnacle Falls. The trout are jumping there like bullfrogs. We'll take Stella and Lucy along, and have a picnic on Eagle Rock. Have you forgotten how a hickory-cured-ham sandwich tastes, Yancey, to a hungry fisherman?"

Evidently the colonel did not believe the story of his lost wealth; so Goree retired again into brooding silence.³⁶

By late afternoon they had traveled ten of the twelve miles between Bethel and Laurel. Half a mile this side of Laurel lay the old Goree place; a mile or two beyond the village lived the Coltranes. The road was now steep and laborious, but the compensations were many. The tilted aisles of the forest were opulent with leaf and bird and bloom. The tonic air put to shame the pharmacopœia. The glades were dark with mossy shade, and bright with shy rivulets winking from the fern and laurels. On the lower side they viewed, framed in the near foliage, exquisite sketches of the far valley swooning in its opal haze.³⁷

Coltrane was pleased to see that his companion was yielding to the spell of the hills and woods. For now they had but to skirt the base of Painter's Cliff; to cross Elder Branch and mount the hill beyond, and Goree would have to face the wanderer home of his fathers. Every rock he passed, every tree, every foot of the roadway, was familiar to him. Though he had forgotten the woods, they thrilled him like the music of "Home, Sweet Home."

They rounded the cliff, descended into Elder Branch, and paused there to let the horses drink and splash in the swift

water. On the right was a rail fence that cornered there, and followed the road and stream. Inclosed by it was the old apple orchard of the home place; the house was yet concealed by the brow of the steep hill. Inside and along the fence, pokeberries, elders, sassafras, and sumac grew high and dense. At a rustle of their branches, both Goree and Coltrane glanced up, and saw a long, yellow, wolfish face above the fence, staring at them with pale, unwinking eyes. The head quickly disappeared; there was a violent swaying of the bushes, and an ungainly figure ran up through the apple orchard in the direction of the house, zigzagging among the trees.³⁸

"That's Garvey," said Coltrane; "the man you sold out to. There's no doubt but he's considerably cracked. I had to send him up for moonshining once, several years ago, in spite of the fact that I believed him irresponsible."³⁹ Why, what the matter, Yancey?"

Goree was wiping his forehead, and his face had lost its color.⁴⁰ "Do I look queer, too?" he asked, trying to smile. "I'm just remembering a few more things." Some of the alcohol had evaporated from his brain. "I recollect now where I got that two hundred dollars."

"Don't think of it," said Coltrane cheerfully. "Later on we'll figure it all out together."

They rode out of the branch, and when they reached the foot of the hill Goree stopped again.

"Did you ever suspect I was a very vain kind of fellow, Colonel?" he asked. "Sort of foolish proud about appearances?"⁴¹

The colonel's eyes refused to wander to the soiled, sagging suit of flax and the faded slouch hat.⁴²

"It seems to me," he replied, mystified, but humoring him. "I remember a young buck about twenty, with the tightest coat, the sleekest hair, and the prancingest saddle horse in the Blue Ridge."

"Right you are," said Goree eagerly. "And it's in me yet though it don't show. Oh, I'm as vain as a turkey gobbler."

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

as proud as Lucifer. I'm going to ask you to indulge this mess of mine in a little matter."

Speak out, Yancey. We'll create you Duke of Laurel and a of Blue Ridge, if you choose; and you shall have a er out of Stella's peacock's tail to wear in your hat."

in earnest. In a few minutes we'll pass the house up on the hill where I was born, and where my people have for nearly a century. Strangers live there now—and look ! I am about to show myself to them ragged and poverty-en, a wastrel and a beggar. Colonel Coltrane, I'm ed to do it. I want you to let me wear your coat and until we are out of sight beyond.⁴³ I know you think it a a pride, but I want to make as good a showing as I can I pass the old place."

ow, what does this mean?" said Coltrane to himself, as mpared his companion's sane looks and quiet demeanor is strange request. But he was already unbuttoning the assenting readily, as if the fancy were in no wise to be ered strange.

coat and hat fitted Goree well. He buttoned the former him with a look of satisfaction and dignity. He and ne were nearly the same size—rather tall, portly, and Twenty-five years were between them, but in appearance might have been brothers. Goree looked older than his is face was puffy and lined; the colonel had the smooth, complexion of a temperate liver.⁴⁴ He put on Goree's utable old flax coat and faded slouch hat.

w," said Goree, taking up the reins, "I'm all right. I ou to ride about ten feet in the rear ⁴⁵ as we go by, Col- o that they can get a good look at me. They'll see I'm k number yet, by any means. I guess I'll show up well to them once more, anyhow. Let's ride on."

et out up the hill at a smart trot, the colonel following, ad been requested.

he sat straight in the saddle, with head erect, but his ere turned to the right, sharply scanning every shrub and and hiding-place in the old homestead yard. Once he

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

muttered to himself, "Will the crazy fool try it, or did I dream half of it?"

It was when he came opposite the family burying ground that he saw what he had been looking for—a puff of white smoke, coming from the thick cedars in one corner. He toppled so slowly to the left that Coltrane had time to urge his horse to that side, and catch him with one arm.

The squirrel hunter had not overpraised his aim. He had sent the bullet where he intended, and where Goree had expected that it would pass—through the breast of Colonel Abner Coltrane's black frock coat.

Goree leaned heavily against Coltrane, but he did not fall. The horses kept pace, side by side, and the Colonel's arm kept him steady. The little white houses of Laurel shone through the trees, half a mile away. Goree reached out one hand and groped until it rested upon Coltrane's fingers, which held his bridle.

"Good friend," he said, and that was all.⁴⁷

Thus did Yancey Goree, as he rode past his old home, make, considering all things, the best showing that was in his power.⁴⁸

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

"O. HENRY"

William Sidney Porter, or as he signed his name in later years, Sydney Porter, was born in Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina, September 11, 1862. To-day he is the most popular of all recent short-story writers, and his work in the first ten years of the twentieth century is undoubtedly the most significant of all that was produced within that decade.

As a boy he "played Indian," took part in feigned adventures of old romance, knew how to box and to fence, and was a chess expert before he was in his teens. Fond of inventing stories from an early age, he told them best in the open, where his natural shyness melted under the genial influence of the great outdoors. To the end of his days, O. Henry loved to "roam about."

His education was about that of the common school with the superposition of much study from life and a vast quantity of reading. Dr. C. Alphonso Smith, the authorized biographer of O. Henry, says that the strongest personal influence brought to bear on the boy during his first twenty years was that of his only teacher, who chanced to be also his aunt, Miss Evelina M. Porter. His mother had died when he was three years of age, and the devotion, intelligence and discipline of Miss Porter supplied the need of a mother's care. It is recorded that Billy Porter was a favorite with teacher and pupils.

He has stated that he read more between the ages of thirteen and nineteen than he did in all the years after, and that he read nothing but the classics. Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" and "The Arabian Nights" were his favorites. But also he read Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and other nineteenth century English novelists as well as the works of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas. He affirmed that in Charles Reade's "The Cloister and the Hearth" there was material

for dozens of short stories alone. At the early age of seven or eight he had been gripped by the dime novel and had learned to tell that type of story. After the dime novel stage he fell under the influence of the tale of the supernatural. Such a narrative as "The Furnished Room" indicates the influence of the ghost story on his own later production.

His spirit of adventure led him, while yet a boy, to plan a whale catching expedition with a youthful friend. They actually got as far as Raleigh, but were glad to turn back home by way of the box-car route.

In his teens he entered his uncle's drug store as clerk and there became an expert pharmacist. There also he displayed his waggishness in drawing cartoons of the customers. It is significant that his mother had painted pictures, and his father had given up medicine to become an inventor. So unusual was his ability as a cartoonist that he was offered an education free of charge at a school in North Carolina, but unable to furnish his books and clothing he had to forego the opportunity. His biographer states that in his drawings he seized upon the central trait of character and exaggerated it sufficiently to reveal at once the identity of his subjects. This ability he later applied to his creative work in the short story, presenting a trait or characteristic which brings a clear-cut personality before the reader. With all his jesting and cartooning, however, he was clean of speech and thought, characteristics he bore throughout life. He never told a story, it has been said which could not be told before a lady. Yet he was no prude. As for his actual training in the drug store, its influence is apparent in such a story as "Makes the Whole World Kin," or "Let me Feel your Pulse."

Constant confinement in the store and much reading began to tell upon his health, and fearing his inheritance of consumption he began to look about for escape. The opportunity came in 1882. One Dr. Hall went on a visit to Texas to visit his son, who had established himself as a noted Texas ranger and he invited Will Porter to go along with him. And so the Carolina days came to a close.

PROPERTY OF
DAVID C.

“O. HENRY”

For some time in Texas, Porter lived on a ranch, with ranger Hall at its head, and the general nature of his life there may be gathered from his collection, “Heart of the West.” In this period of struggle between cattle owners and cattle thieves, young Porter saw something of the real desperado. He was a cowboy for a little while, lassoing cattle, shearing sheep and “busting bronchos.” But although such Western pursuits were balanced by his study of French, German and Spanish, yet his real interest lay always in people and events. After two years on the ranch, he went in 1884, to Austin, the capital of Texas. There he was to remain more than ten years.

For the first three years he lived as a sort of adopted son in the home of Joe Harrell, a retired merchant. His occupations were manifold and he came to know Austin well. He was clerk in a tobacco store, bookkeeper in a real estate firm, draftsman in a land office, teller in a bank, singer, actor, editor, member of a military company, a serenader and a cartoonist. He still loved to “bum” and continued to live in an atmosphere of adventure which was largely his own creating.

From 1887 to 1891 he was draftsman in a land office, and in the first of these years he was married to Miss Athol Roach. It is significant that that was the year he began to rely on his pen as a means of additional support, in the contribution of jokes, sketches and short articles to various papers and magazines. In this period was born his only child, Margaret Porter.

In January, 1891, he entered the First National Bank of Austin, still working at his writer's trade and establishing in April, 1894, the “Rolling Stone.” Though this publication lived only one year, the period was adequate to give him security in the opinion that writing was his calling. He resigned his position in December, 1894, and when the periodical failed he went to Houston to accept a position on the *Daily Post*. That was in 1895, and he remained in Houston until June, 1896, when he was called to Austin to stand trial for alleged embezzlement of funds while he was teller of the

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

National Bank. He started for Austin, but on the way changed his mind and went to Central America. This act, which could not be recalled, O. Henry afterward spoke of as one that vitally affected his whole life. He protested his innocence and his friends believed him innocent. One item of the charge read that he had embezzled a sum in November, 1895, when it was an open fact that he had been for some time in Houston. The affairs of the bank had been managed so loosely that a citizen has recorded that Porter's predecessor was driven to retirement, his successor to attempted suicide. But he made the mistake, as he afterward regarded it, of taking refuge in Central America. There he led a hard life, even digging ditches and at times reduced to a single banana for his meal.

When in 1897 he heard that his wife's health was failing he returned to Austin. He went under bond until court met in February, 1898. Mrs. Porter died in July, 1897. In December of that year his first short-story was accepted. On February 17, 1898, he was found guilty, and on March 25, he was sentenced to five years imprisonment in the Ohio penitentiary at Columbus. It was then he used the signature "Sydney Porter," dropping the "Will," and that he took up the pen name "O. Henry." His sentence was afterward commuted to three years and three months, because of his excellent conduct, and he came out July 24, 1901. In prison his knowledge of drugs proved in two ways a blessing: he had comparative freedom, in looking after the minor ills of the prisoners and he came to hear their life stories. "The Gentle Grafters" is a collection based on his rounds among the patients and the stories they told him. "A Retrieved Reformation," the famous "crook" story, better known as "Jimmy Valentine," was built upon the actual experience of one Jimmy Connors, a prisoner who died after O. Henry left the place. In addition to his pharmaceutical duties he was appointed to a position in the steward's office. This prison experience made from Will Porter, the wag, cartoonist, and writer of humorous squibs O. Henry, the writer of short-stories. He had been humiliated in suffering the experience of prison life and had kept from his

Friends as far as possible the knowledge of his whereabouts. Though he did not wince nor cry aloud under the bludgeoning of chance, yet, inevitably, he was changed. Though he had grown in sympathy and charity, his reticence became more pronounced, a reticence which subsequent friends rarely penetrated.

Among his best prison stories are “A Blackjack Bargainer,” here reprinted, “Georgia’s Ruling,” and “The Marionettes.” He wrote many others while still in prison, forwarding them to friends who mailed them to the publishers.

On leaving Columbus, in 1901, O. Henry spent a few months in Pittsburgh, with his wife’s family. In 1902, Mr. Gilman Hall, then associate editor of *Ainslee’s Magazine*, having accepted a number of his stories, urged him to come to New York. And so it was that O. Henry, having fetched full of his larger circle of roaming, settled down in the city he liked affectionately to call, “Little Old Bagdad by the Subway.” And here he entered into his inheritance.

In New York O. Henry used to “walk at all hours of the day and night along the river front, through Hell’s Kitchen, down the Bowery, dropping into all manner of places, and talking with any one who would hold converse.” The lives of working girls in particular interested him. “An Unfinished Story” has had, perhaps, the widest favor as a realistic example of this interest, but “The Third Ingredient,” “The Trimmed Lamp,” and “The Furnished Room” are others equally good in local color and suggestive of his sympathy. From 1904 to 1910 his stories reflect entertainingly, always humorously, and sometimes with pathos the life of the city.

In 1907 he was married to Miss Sallie Coleman of Asheville, North Carolina, a sweetheart of his boyhood. Meantime his works were being collected into book form. His first venture between covers was “Cabbages and Kings,” more or less a novel, a work not usually regarded as possessing the merit of the author’s short-stories. Its plot, however, is one of the many illustrations of a form he loved to exploit, as may be found by comparing it with “The Gift of the Magi,” “Lost on a Parade,” and “The Shocks of Doom.” His second vol-

ume was a collection, "The Four Million," after which there appeared about two books a year until 1911.

The gifted author's health had been failing, however, and in 1909 his letters show that he was falling behind in the amazing output of his genius. He tried recuperating in Asheville, but the lure of New York drew him and he returned in April, 1910. On June 3 he collapsed, and was taken to a hospital, where he died on June 5.

It is too early to estimate the comparative value of O. Henry as a writer of literature. But it can at least be said that his popularity is unprecedented among story writers, that his influence is the greatest factor in the product of most of our contemporary short-story fiction, and that he bids fair for a long time not to wane but to increase.

A list of O. Henry's best stories:

- "Tobin's Palm," "The Gift of the Magi," "An Unfinished Story," "After Twenty Years," "The Furnished Room" (In "The Four Million").
- "The Trimmed Lamp," "The Last Leaf" (In "The Trimmed Lamp").
- "Hearts and Crosses," "The Pimienta Pancakes," "The Caballero's Way," "Christmas by Injunction," "A Chaparral Prince" (In "Heart of the West").
- "The Shocks of Doom," "The Plutonian Fire," "Transients in Arcadia" (In "The Voice of the City").
- "Roads of Destiny," "Next to Reading Matter," "A Doubledyed Deceiver," "A Retrieved Reformation," "Friends in San Rosario" (In "Roads of Destiny").
- "The Rose of Dixie," "The Third Ingredient," "The Hiding of Black Bill," "Buried Treasure" (In "Options").
- "A Ramble in Aphasia," "A Municipal Report," "A Night in New Arabia," "Proof of the Pudding" (In "Strictly Business").

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

“O. HENRY”

The World and the Door,” “The Theory and the Hound,”
“The Hypotheses of Failure,” “Girl,” “The Ransom
of Red Chief,” “The Whirligig of Life,” “The Roads
We Take,” “A Blackjack Bargainer,” “Georgia’s
Ruling,” “Madame Bo-Peep of the Ranches” (In
“Whirligigs”).

The Last of the Troubadours,” “Makes the Whole World
Kin,” “Jimmy Hayes and Muriel,” “October and
June,” “The Caliph and the Cad” (In “Sixes and
Sevens”).

The Marquis and Miss Sally,” “The Atavism of John Tom
Little Bear,” “The Marionettes” (In “Rolling
Stones”).

THE WELL *

BY WILLIAM WYMARK JACOBS

I

Two men stood in the billiard-room of an old country house talking. Play, which had been of a half-hearted nature, was over, and they sat at the open window, looking out over the park stretching away beneath them, conversing idly.¹

"Your time's nearly up, Jem," said one at length. "Time six weeks you'll be yawning out the honeymoon and cursing the man—woman I mean—who invented them."²

Jem Benson stretched his long limbs in the chair and grunted in dissent.

"I've never understood it," continued Wilfred Carr, yawning. "It's not in my line at all; I never had enough money for my own wants, let alone for two. Perhaps if I were rich as you or Cræsus I might regard it differently."

There was just sufficient meaning in the latter part of the remark for his cousin to forbear to reply to it. He continued to gaze out of the window and to smoke slowly.

"Not being as rich as Cræsus—or you," resumed Carr, regarding him from beneath lowered lids, "I paddle my own canoe down the stream of Time, and, tying it to my friends' door-posts, go in to eat their dinners."

"Quite Venetian," said Jem Benson, still looking out of the window. "It's not a bad thing for you, Wilfred, that you have the door-posts and dinners—and friends."

Carr grunted in his turn. "Seriously though, Jem," he said slowly, "you're a lucky fellow, a very lucky fellow. If there is a better girl above ground than Olive,³ I should like to see her."

* Copyright, 1902, by Dodd, Mead, and Company.

Copyright, 1900, 1901, 1902, by W. W. Jacobs, Harper and Brothers, and the International News Company.

THE WELL

"Yes," said the other, quietly.

"She's such an exceptional girl," continued Carr, staring out of the window. "She's so good and gentle. She thinks you are a bundle of all the virtues."

He laughed frankly and joyously, but the other man did not join him.

"Strong sense of right and wrong, though," continued Carr, musingly. "Do you know, I believe that if she found out that you were not——"

"Not what?" demanded Benson, turning upon him fiercely. "Not what?"

"Everything that you are," returned his cousin, with a grin that belied his words, "I believe she'd drop you."

"Talk about something else," said Benson, slowly, "your pleasantries are not always in the best taste."

Wilfred Carr rose and taking a cue from the rack, bent over the board and practiced one or two favorite shots. "The only subject I can talk about just at present is my own financial affairs," he said, slowly, as he walked round the table.

"Talk about something else," said Benson again, bluntly.

"And the two things are connected," said Carr, and dropping his cue he half sat on the table and eyed his cousin.

There was a long silence. Benson pitched the end of his cigar out of the window, and leaning back closed his eyes.

"Do you follow me?" inquired Carr at length.

Benson opened his eyes and nodded at the window.

"Do you want to follow my cigar?" he demanded.

"I should prefer to depart by the usual way for your sake," returned the other, unabashed. "If I left by the window all sorts of questions would be asked, and you know what a talkative chap I am."

"So long as you don't talk about my affairs," returned the other, restraining himself by an obvious effort, "you can talk yourself hoarse."

"I'm in a mess," said Carr, slowly, "a devil of a mess. If I don't raise fifteen hundred by this day fortnight, I may be getting my board and lodging free."

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"Would that be any change?" questioned Benson.

"The quality would," retorted the other. "The address also would not be good. Seriously, Jem, will you let me have the fifteen hundred?"

"No," said the other, simply.

Carr went white. "It's to save me from ruin," he said, thickly.

"I've helped you till I'm tired," said Benson, turning and regarding him, "and it is all to no good. If you've got into a mess, get out of it. You should not be so fond of giving autographs away."

"It's foolish, I admit," said Carr, deliberately. "I won't do so any more. By the way, I've got some to sell. You needn't sneer. They're not my own."

"Whose are they?" inquired the other.

"Yours."

Benson got up from his chair and crossed over to him. "What is this?" he asked, quietly. "Blackmail?"

"Call it what you like," said Carr. "I've got some letters for sale, price fifteen hundred. And I know a man who would buy them at that price for the mere chance of getting Olive from you. I'll give you first offer."

"If you have got any letters bearing my signature, you will be good enough to give them to me," said Benson, very slowly.

"They're mine," said Carr lightly; "given to me by the lady you wrote them to. I must say that they are not all in the best possible taste."

His cousin reached forward suddenly, and catching him by the collar of his coat pinned him down on the table.

"Give me those letters," he breathed, sticking his face close to Carr's.

"They're not here," said Carr, struggling. "I'm not a fool. Let me go, or I'll raise the price."

The other man raised him from the table in his powerful hands, apparently with the intention of dashing his head against it. Then suddenly his hold relaxed as an astonished-

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

looking maid-servant entered the room with letters. Carr sat up hastily.

"That's how it was done," said Benson, for the girl's benefit as he took the letters.

"I don't wonder at the other man making him pay for it, then," said Carr, blandly.

"You will give me those letters?" said Benson, suggestively, as the girl left the room.

"At the price I mentioned, yes," said Carr; "but so sure as I am a living man, if you lay your clumsy hands on me again, I'll double it. Now, I'll leave you for a time while you think it over."

He took a cigar from the box and lighting it carefully quitted the room. His cousin waited until the door had closed behind him, and then turning to the window sat there in a fit of fury as silent as it was terrible.

The air was fresh and sweet from the park, heavy with the scent of new-mown grass. The fragrance of a cigar was now added to it, and glancing out he saw his cousin pacing slowly by. He rose and went to the door, and then, apparently altering his mind, he returned to the window and watched the figure of his cousin as it moved slowly away into the moonlight. Then he rose again, and, for a long time, the room was empty.⁴

.⁵

It was empty when Mrs. Benson came in some time later to say good-night to her son on her way to bed. She walked slowly round the table, and pausing at the window gazed from it in idle thought, until she saw the figure of her son advancing with rapid strides toward the house. He looked up at the window.

"Good-night," said she.

"Good-night," said Benson, in a deep voice.

"Where is Wilfred?"

"Oh, he has gone," said Benson.

"Gone?"

"We had a few words; he was wanting money again, and I

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

gave him a piece of my mind. I don't think we shall see him again."

"Poor Wilfred!" sighed Mrs. Benson. "He is always in trouble of some sort. I hope that you were not too hard upon him."

"No more than he deserved," said her son, sternly.⁶ "Good-night."

II

The well,⁷ which had long ago fallen into disuse, was almost hidden by the thick tangle of undergrowth which ran riot at that corner of the old park. It was partly covered by the shrunken half of a lid, above which a rusty windlass creaked in company with the music of the pines when the wind blew strongly. The full light of the sun never reached it, and the ground surrounding it was moist and green when other parts of the park were gaping with the heat.

Two people walking slowly round the park in the fragrant stillness of a summer evening strayed in the direction of the well.

"No use going through this wilderness, Olive," said Benson, pausing on the outskirts of the pines and eying with some disfavor⁸ the gloom beyond.

"Best part of the park," said the girl briskly; "you know it's my favorite spot."

"I know you're very fond of sitting on the coping," said the man slowly, "and I wish you wouldn't. One day you will lean back too far and fall in."

"And make the acquaintance of Truth," said Olive lightly.⁹ "Come along."

She ran from him and was lost in the shadow of the pines, the bracken¹⁰ crackling beneath her feet as she ran. Her companion followed slowly, and emerging from the gloom saw her poised daintily on the edge of the well with her feet hidden in the rank grass and nettles which surrounded it. She motioned her companion to take a seat by her side, and smiled

softly as she felt a strong arm passed about her waist.

"I like this place," said she, breaking a long silence, "it is so dismal—so uncanny. Do you know *I* wouldn't dare to sit here alone, Jem. I should imagine that all sorts of dreadful things were hidden behind the bushes and trees, waiting to spring out on me."¹¹ Ugh!"

"You'd better let me take you in," said her companion tenderly; "the well isn't always wholesome, especially in the hot weather. Let's make a move."

The girl gave an obstinate little shake, and settled herself more securely on her seat.

"Smoke your cigar in peace," she said quietly. "I am settled here for a quiet talk. Has anything been heard from Wilfred yet?"¹²

"Nothing."

"Quite a dramatic disappearance, isn't it?" she continued. "Another scrape, I suppose, and another letter for you in the same old strain: 'Dear Jem, help me out.'"

Jem Benson blew a cloud of fragrant smoke into the air, and holding his cigar between his teeth brushed away the ash from his coat sleeves.

"I wonder what he would have done without you," said the girl, pressing his arm affectionately. "Gone under long ago, I suppose. When we are married, Jem, I shall presume upon the relationship to lecture him. He is very wild, but he has his good points, poor fellow."

"I never saw them," said Benson, with startling bitterness.¹³ "God knows I never saw them."

"He's nobody's enemy but his own," said the girl, startled by his outburst.

"You don't know much about him," said the other, sharply. "He was not above blackmail; not above ruining the life of a friend to do himself a benefit. A loafer, a cur, and a liar!"¹⁴

The girl looked up at him soberly and timidly and took his arm without a word, and they both sat silent while evening deepened into night and the beams of the moon, filtering

through the branches, surrounded them with a silver network. Her head sank upon his shoulder, till suddenly with a sharp cry she sprang to her feet.

"What was that?" she cried breathlessly.

"What was what?" demanded Benson, springing up and clutching her fast by the arm.

She caught her breath and tried to laugh. "You're hurting me, Jem."

His hold relaxed.

"What is the matter?" he asked gently. "What was it startled you?"

"I was startled," she said, slowly, putting her hands on his shoulder. "I suppose the words I used just now are ringing in my ears, but I fancied that somebody behind us whispered, 'Jem, help me out.'"¹⁵

"Fancy," repeated Benson, and his voice shook; "but these fancies are not good for you. You—are frightened—at the dark and the gloom of these trees. Let me take you back to the house."

"No, I'm not frightened," said the girl, reseating herself. "I should never be really frightened of anything when you were with me, Jem. I'm surprised at myself for being so silly."

The man made no reply but stood, a strong, dark figure, a yard or two from the well, as though waiting for her to join him.

"Come and sit down, sir," cried Olive, patting the brickwork with her small, white hand, "one would think that you did not like your company."

He obeyed slowly and took a seat by her side, drawing so hard at his cigar that the light of it shone upon his face at every breath. He passed his arm, firm and rigid as steel, behind her, with his hand resting on the brickwork beyond.

"Are you warm enough?" he asked tenderly, as she made a little movement.

"Pretty fair," she shivered; "one oughtn't to be cold at this



"I've dropped it down the well"

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

THE WELL

time of the year, but there's a cold, damp air comes up from the well."

As she spoke a faint splash sounded from the depth below, and for the second time that evening, she sprang from the well with a little cry of dismay.

"What is it now?" he asked in a fearful voice. He stood by her side and gazed at the well, as though half expecting to see the cause of her alarm emerge from it.

"Oh, my bracelet," she cried in distress, "my poor mother's bracelet. I've dropped it down the well."¹⁶

"Your bracelet!" repeated Benson, dully. "Your bracelet? The diamond one?"

"The one that was my mother's," said Olive. "Oh, we can get it back surely. We must have the water drained off."

"Your bracelet!" repeated Benson, stupidly.

"Jem," said the girl in terrified tones, "dear Jem, what is the matter?"

For the man she loved was standing regarding her with horror.¹⁷ The moon which touched it was not responsible for all the whiteness of the distorted face, and she shrank back in fear to the edge of the well. He saw her fear and by a mighty effort regained his composure and took her hand.

"Poor little girl," he murmured, "you frightened me. I was not looking when you cried, and I thought that you were slipping from my arms, down—down——"

His voice broke, and the girl throwing herself into his arms clung to him convulsively.

"There, there," said Benson, fondly, "don't cry, don't cry."

"To-morrow," said Olive, half-laughing, half-crying, "we will come round the well with hook and line and fish for it. It will be quite a new sport."

"No, we must try some other way," said Benson. "You shall have it back."

"How?" asked the girl.

"You shall see," said Benson. "To-morrow morning at test you shall have it back. Till then promise me that you will not mention your loss to anyone. Promise."

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"I promise," said Olive, wonderingly. "But why not?"

"It is of great value, for one thing, and—— But there—— there are many reasons. For one thing it is my duty to get it for you."

"Wouldn't you like to jump down for it?" she asked mockingly. "Listen."

She stooped for a stone and dropped it down.

"Fancy being where that is now," she said, peering into the blackness; "fancy going round and round like a mouse in a pail, clutching at the slimy sides, with the water filling your mouth, and looking up to the little patch of sky above."¹⁸

"You had better come in," said Benson, very quietly. "You are developing a taste for the morbid and horrible."

The girl turned, and taking his arm walked slowly in the direction of the house; Mrs. Benson, who was sitting in the porch, rose to receive them.

"You shouldn't have kept her out so long," she said chidingly. "Where have you been?"

"Sitting on the well," said Olive, smiling, "discussing our future."

"I don't believe that place is healthy," said Mrs. Benson emphatically. "I really think it might be filled in, Jem."

"All right," said her son, slowly. "Pity it wasn't filled in long ago."¹⁹

He took the chair vacated by his mother as she entered the house with Olive, and with his hands hanging limply over the sides sat in deep thought. After a time he rose, and going upstairs to a room which was set apart for sporting requisites selected a sea fishing line and some hooks and stole softly downstairs again. He walked swiftly across the park in the direction of the well, turning before he entered the shadow of the trees to look back at the lighted windows of the house. Then having arranged his line he sat on the edge of the well and cautiously lowered it.

He sat with his lips compressed, occasionally looking about him in a startled fashion, as though he half expected to see something peering at him from the belt of trees. Time after

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

THE WELL

he lowered his line until at length in pulling it up he heard a little metallic tinkle against the side of the well.

He held his breath then, and forgetting his fears drew the line inch by inch, so as not to lose its precious burden. His heart beat rapidly, and his eyes were bright. As the line came up in he saw the catch hanging to the hook, and with a steady hand drew the last few feet in. Then he saw that instead of the bracelet he had hooked a bunch of keys.²⁰

With a faint cry he shook them from the hook into the water, and stood breathing heavily. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. He walked up and down a bit and stretched his great muscles; then he came back to the well and resumed his task.

For an hour or more the line was lowered without result. In his eagerness he forgot his fears, and with eyes bent down he fished slowly and carefully. Twice the hook became entangled in something, and was with difficulty released. It was at a third time,²¹ and all his efforts failed to free it. Then he dropped the line down the well, and with head bent forward toward the house.

He went first to the stables at the rear, and then retiring to his room for some time paced restlessly up and down. Then without removing his clothes he flung himself upon the bed and fell into a troubled sleep.²²

III

Long before anybody else was astir he arose and stole softly down the stairs. The sunlight was stealing in at every crevice, and falling in long streaks across the darkened rooms. The dining-room into which he looked struck chill and cheerless in the dark yellow light which came through the lowered blinds. He remembered that it had the same appearance when his father lay dead²³ in the house; now, as then, everything seemed ghastly and unreal; the very chairs standing as their owners had left them the night before seemed to be indulging in some dark communication of ideas.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Slowly and noiselessly he opened the hall door and passed into the fragrant air beyond. The sun was shining on the drenched grass and trees, and a slowly vanishing white mist rolled like smoke about the grounds. For a moment he stood breathing deeply the sweet air of the morning, and then he walked slowly in the direction of the stables.

The rusty creaking of a pump-handle and a spatter of water upon the red-tiled courtyard showed that somebody else was astir, and a few steps farther he beheld a brawny, sandy-haired man gasping wildly under severe self-infliction at the pump.

"Everything ready, George?"²⁴ he asked quietly.

"Yes, sir," said the man, straightening up suddenly and touching his forehead. "Bob's just finishing the arrangements inside. It's a lovely morning for a dip. The water in that well must be just icy."

"Be as quick as you can," said Benson impatiently.

"Very good, sir," said George, burnishing his face harshly with a very small towel which had been hanging over the top of the pump. "Hurry up, Bob."

In answer to his summons a man appeared at the door of the stable with a coil of stout rope over his arm and a large metal candlestick in his hand.²⁵

"Just to try the air, sir," said George, following his master's glance, "a well gets rather foul sometimes, but if a candle can live down it, a man can."

His master nodded, and the man, hastily pulling up the neck of his shirt and thrusting his arms into his coat, followed him as he led the way slowly to the well.

"Beg pardon, sir," said George, drawing up to his side, "but you are not looking over and above well this morning. I'll let me go down I'd enjoy the bath."

"No, no," said Benson, peremptorily.²⁶

"You ain't fit to go down, sir," persisted his follower. "I've never seen you look so²⁷ before. Now if——"

"Mind your business," said his master curtly.

George became silent and the three walked with swinging strides through the long wet grass to the well. Bob flung the

THE WELL

on the ground and at a sign from his master handed him candlestick.

"Here's the line for it, sir," said Bob, fumbling in his pockets.

Benson took it from him and slowly tied it to the candlestick. Then he placed it on the edge of the well, and striking a match, lit the candle and began slowly to lower it.

"Hold hard, sir," said George quickly, laying his hand on his knee, "you must tilt it or the string'll burn through."

Just as he spoke the string parted and the candlestick fell into the water below.²⁸

"I'll soon get another," said George, starting up.

"Never mind, the well's all right," said Benson.

"I won't take a moment, sir," said the other over his shoulder.

"Are you master here, or am I?" said Benson hoarsely.

George came back slowly, a glance at his master's face showing the protests upon his tongue, and he stood by watching Benson sulkily as he sat on the well and removed his outer garments. Both men watched him curiously, as having completed his preparations he stood grim and silent with his hands on his knees.

"I wish you'd let me go, sir," said George, plucking up courage to address him. "You ain't fit to go, you've got a fever or something. I shouldn't wonder it's the typhoid. They've got it in the village bad."

For a moment Benson looked at him angrily, then his gaze softened. "Not this time, George," he said, quietly. He took the loose end of the rope and placed it under his arms, and he lay down and threw one leg over the side of the well.

"Now are you going about it, sir?" queried George, laying hold of the rope and signing to Bob to do the same.

"I'll call out when I reach the water," said Benson; "then pull up three yards more quickly so that I can get to the bot-

tom very good, sir," answered both.

His master threw the other leg over the coping and sat

motionless. His back was turned toward the men as he with head bent, looking down the shaft. He sat for so long that George became uneasy.

"All right, sir?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Benson, slowly. "If I tug at the rope, George pull up at once. Lower away."

The rope passed steadily through their hands until a hollow cry from the darkness below and a faint splashing warned them that he had reached the water. They gave him three yards more and stood with relaxed grasp and straining ears, waiting.

"He's gone under," said Bob in a low voice.

The other nodded, and moistening his huge palms took a firmer grip of the rope.

Fully a minute passed, and the men began to exchange uneasy glances. Then a sudden tremendous jerk followed by a series of feebler ones nearly tore the rope from their grasp.

"Pull!" shouted George, placing one foot on the side of the well, hauling desperately. "Pull! pull! He's stuck fast; he's coming; P—U—LL!"

In response to their terrific exertions the rope came slowly, inch by inch, until at length a violent splashing was heard and at the same moment a scream of unutterable horror³⁰ came echoing up the shaft.

"What a weight he is!" panted Bob. "He's stuck fast; he's something. Keep still, sir; for heaven's sake, keep still."

For the taut rope was being jerked violently by the struggles of the weight at the end of it. Both men with grunts and sighs hauled it in foot by foot.

"All right, sir," cried George, cheerfully.

He had one foot against the well, and was pulling manfully. The burden was nearing the top. A long pull and a strain, and the face of a dead man with mud in the eyes and nostrils came peering over the edge. Behind it was the ghastly face of his master; but this he saw too late, for with a great effort he let go his hold of the rope and stepped back. The suddenness overthrew his assistant, and the rope tore through his hands.³¹ There was a frightful splash.

THE WELL

"You fool!" stammered Bob, and ran to the well helplessly.

"Run!" cried George. "Run for another line."

He bent over the coping and called eagerly down as his assistant sped back to the stables shouting wildly. His voice re-echoed down the shaft, but all else was silence.³²

WILLIAM WYMARK JACOBS

Mr. W. W. Jacobs was born in London on the eighth of September, 1863. Having been educated in private schools, he entered at twenty years of age the Savings Bank Department of the Civil Service. There he remained until 1899, finding time in the intervals of work to write short-stories. His first volume, "Many Cargoes," was published in 1896, and this was followed in 1897 by "More Cargoes." In these volumes the public found something new and thenceforth eagerly looked forward to the tales of the English writer.

Since his marriage in 1900 to Miss Agnes Eleanor Williams, Mr. Jacobs has devoted most of his time to writing, and has produced on the average about a book a year. The most important story collections are "Light Freights," 1901; "The Lady of the Barge," 1902; "Odd Craft," 1903; "Captains All," 1905; "Short Cruises," 1907; "Sailors' Knots," 1909; "Night Watches," 1914. Many of the stories in these volumes had found previous publication in American periodicals, *Harper's Magazine* having been one of the first to exploit his unique quality about the year 1900.

Mr. Jacobs has succeeded in two kinds of work: the tragic and the humorous. The humorous stories have to do for the most part with the river Thames below London, with the craft floating upon the dusky bosom of that stream, and particularly with the barges. The skippers, the mates, their wives and their sweethearts are the chief characters. Irascible old men and domineering women, irascible women and domineering men, a spinster now and then, a pretty girl here and there,—these are prominent figures among the sailors and captains, and in the tales exclusive of sailors and captains. As the titles of his books indicate, Mr. Jacobs has spent much of his life about the docks and wharves, the places on the river,

PROPERTY OF
DAVID



W. W. JACOBS

REPRODUCED BY THE

and the small towns on the coast. The atmosphere of the Thames is reproduced faithfully from his voyages aboard the barges.

The local color,—such as the shore of the Thames, the homes of the bargees, the dialect,—was the distinctively new element in these humorous stories. Local color alone does not make a narrative. But local color may be the new flavoring ingredient which gives the story a novel appeal.

A noteworthy fact about most of his humorous tales is the fact that he has worked one plot formula again and again. It may be expressed, in general, as a funny turn of the tables. But it is something more than this; it is a double turn of the tables, or a repeated turn. A, let us say, plans something against B; but B outdoes A in his own scheming and puts A to shame. Then A may react and, finally, outdo B. It is a sort of "boomerang" plot which he has exploited repeatedly, and better than any other short-story author. It corresponds, in a way, to O. Henry's so-called "criss-cross" plots, illustrated, for example, in "The Gift of the Magi"; and it is perhaps this semi-resemblance which has given to Mr. Jacobs the title, "the English O. Henry." In other respects the two writers actually have little in common, beyond an obvious feeling for the incongruous which plays its part in the production of laughter.

Mr. Jacobs's tragic stories have to do with a slightly different class of characters. The social level is usually higher, a level better adapted to tragic effect as this author is able to secure it. The most noted of those tales is "The Monkey's Paw," which having been dramatized and having had wider publication, is here rejected in favor of "The Well." "In the Library," "Jerry Bundler," and "The Lady of the Barge" have also been dramatized with fair success. "Jerry Bundler," a tragedy, was metamorphosed into tragi-comedy by a substitution of blank cartridges for real ones in the pistol used by Leek. "The Lady of the Barge," a farcical narrative, becomes on the stage "Beauty and the Barge."

As Mr. St. John Adcock said in the *London Bookman*, in

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

1905, Mr. Jacobs represents well the author who is both artistic and popular.

In reading the following stories, observe how justice works, and notice the use of the supernatural:

- "The Belled Buzzard," by Irvin Cobb (In "The Escape of Mr. Trim").
- "The Inn of the Two Witches," by Joseph Conrad (In "Within the Tides").
- "The Leather Funnel," by Sir A. Conan Doyle (In "Round the Fire Stories").
- "The Shadows on the Wall," by Mary E. W. Freeman (In "The Wind in the Rosebush").
- "The Mark of the Beast," and "The Return of Imray," by Rudyard Kipling (In "Life's Handicap").
- "The Phantom 'Rickshaw," by Rudyard Kipling (In "The Phantom 'Rickshaw").
- "Markheim," by Robert Louis Stevenson (In "The Merry Men").

Other stories by W. W. Jacobs:

- "Rule of Three" (In "More Cargoes").
- "Sam's Boy," and "Jerry Bundler" (In "Light Freights").
- "The Lady of the Barge," "The Monkey's Paw," "In the Library," "A Golden Venture" (In "The Lady of the Barge").
- "The Money Box," "Lawyer Quince," "The Third String" (In "Odd Craft").
- "The Changeling," and "A Love Knot" (In "Short Cruises").
- "The Toll-House," "Peter's Pence" (In "Sailors' Knots").
- "Back to Back," "The Weaker Vessel," "The Three Sisters," "Easy Money" (In "Night Watches").

THE COMFORTER *

BY ELIZABETH JORDAN

It had been a very slight operation, under gas—so slight that an hour after I returned to consciousness my sole reminders of the experience were an impressive wad of cotton in my left ear, a pain and buzzing sensation in the same organ, and an acute sense of having been abused and of needing sympathy.¹

No sympathy, however, was offered me. The doctors were gone, the nurse had temporarily disappeared, and there was nothing more responsive in sight than the four severely hygienic walls of my private room at the hospital. Various pieces of oddly shaped apparatus for ear treatment, with which, during later hours, I was to have intimate and unpleasant association, hung from white-painted iron rods near the bed. A small, glass-topped table was beside my pillow. Within reach were electric-light switches and bell-buttons; but where was the touch of the human hand, the brooding solicitude of the human heart, to which, by every right, I felt myself entitled? My sense of injury deepened and I pushed a button; but if I had looked for comfort from the nurse who responded, one glance at that remote being taught me that I looked in vain.

"Is there anything you want?" she asked coldly.

"No-o-o," I admitted, with regret, after a vain attempt to think of some excuse for having called her to my side.

She raised her eyebrows, smoothed my pillow professionally, laid a perfunctory finger on my pulse, and finally, after shaking a clinical thermometer, tucked it into my mouth. Having shown me these attentions, she sank into a reverie in which

* Copyright, 1914, by Harper and Brothers.

it was clear that my affairs had no part. A minute or two later she remembered me, removed the thermometer, and bestowed a casual glance upon it.²

"Normal," she observed, briefly, and started toward the door. I checked her in her flight.

"I thought," I remarked, hopefully, "that perhaps *you* could think of some delicate attention I need."

She laughed. "You don't need anything," she remarked, calmly. "You'll be out of here in four days." Then, softening³ a little, she added: "But I know what's the matter with you. You're lonesome."

"Perhaps that's it," I sighed. "I knew there was something. It's a horrible sensation, and of course it couldn't have anything to do with the excavations you people have been making in my ear-drum."

She studied me in silence for an instant; then, with dawning interest, pressed the bone behind my ear.

"Any pain there?" she asked.

"No," I admitted, "not yet. But I'm sure there will be, the next time you inquire. It's what all the doctors are looking for; and after I've brooded over it a few hours more, I'll have it."

"Nonsense!" she said, briskly. "I'm going to order your supper. What would you like? Tea or chocolate?"

I waved away the sordid topic. "If this thing develops into mastoiditis," I remarked, "or cerebro-spinal meningitis, please tell my family not to feel any remorse over neglecting me in my last⁴ hours——"

"Imaginative," she murmured, as if to herself. "Needs diversion." Then to me: "There *is* something you need. You need the Comforter.⁵ Wait, and I'll send it to you."

She was gone, and I waited, perforce. The Comforter? It sounded serious, but interesting. What was it? Obviously not bed-clothing, for it was an April evening, and I was already well supplied with that. I set my imagination to work, and found it vacillating between the claims of a hot-water bottle and a religious picture. Whatever it was, I reflected

PROPERTY OF
DAVID

bitterly, they'd better send it soon, before it was too late. The pain in my ear was growing worse. If I died, the corridors would be filled with stricken souls, and a procession of automobiles containing weeping friends would extend from the hospital to Harlem. But when I was merely half dead and wholly miserable nobody cared. I touched the bone behind my ear and decided that it was growing sensitive. It might well be, for I had been pressing it at close intervals since I returned to consciousness; but I did not stop to think of that, for by this time I was mentally selecting my pall-bearers.

I had just decided that the incurably optimistic expression of my best man friend unfitted him for the sad occasion, when I heard a soft tap,⁶ followed by the opening of my door, around which a head promptly appeared, covered with short yellow curls. A pair of brown eyes looked at me, and two rows of tiny, white teeth flashed in an adorable smile. The next instant the door closed, and a small boy about five years old stood with his back against it, regarding me with shy hesitation, as if to make sure that I was awake and in a hospitable mood. He looked like a study in blue and gold as he posed there, outlined against the white woodwork; for below his yellow curls he wore blue rompers, blue socks stopped half-way up his chubby legs, and a yellow rose was pinned ostentatiously upon his breast. On his feet were slippers with straps over the instep, and as he felt my eye resting on him he slowly drew the top of one slipper back and forth on the floor, as if following some invisible design.

"How do you do?" I asked, when the silence was becoming oppressive. "Won't you come nearer and sit down?"

The invitation seemed to be what he was waiting for. With the assured step of one now certain of his welcome, he came toward me, climbed upon a chair near the bed, and sat facing me, his short legs straight out in front of him, his brown eyes turned upon me with warm interest in their clear depths, a big dimple appearing and disappearing in his left cheek.

"How do you feel?" he inquired.

"Why, I—I think I feel much better, thank you," I assured him, with conviction in my tone. For it was true. The suddenness of his appearance, the charm of his personality, and the beauty of the picture he made as he sat before me diverted and delighted me.

He nodded. "Miss Smiff said you would," he corroborated. "Miss Smiff said, 'Go and see the lady in 14, an' she will feel better.' So I came."

"That was very good of you," I observed, gratefully, staring at him with growing interest. So this was the Comforter. He looked the part. It was growing dark, but all the light in the dim room seemed to focus on his yellow curls, with the effect of a soft halo.

"I live here," he explained, simply. "I live here all the time. I don't get lonesome. Some folks get lonesome. Then they cwy. Then I comes an' talk to them. That makes them feel better wight off," he added, modestly, crossing his hands over his plump little stomach with a capable air which was irresistible, and for which, I subsequently learned, the head nurse had been his unconscious model.⁷

"Children cwy lots," he went on. "Sometimes when they have their eyes bandaged I hold their hands. Then they don't get fwightened in the dark. It's awful dark when your eyes is bandaged," he continued, settling in his chair as if for a long chat. "Some boys see lions an' tigers then, an' snakes an'—an' el'phan's." He paused a moment, and regarded me anxiously as this last word fell from his lips. Observing that I received it with quiet respect, he continued, with growing assurance:

"But when I hold their hands they just see engines an' turkey an' birthday cakes an' fishes in the water an'—an' nice things. An' we talk about them."

"That's capital," I said. "They must be very glad indeed to have you hold their hands."

He smiled. It was obvious that he was used to approval, as well he might be. The pain in my ear⁸ felt better; in fact, I had almost forgotten it.

PROPERTY OF
DAVID C. SMITH

THE COMFORTER

A little boy is in there." He indicated a room next to e. "He's seven. His name is Willie Maxwell. He was al sick. He's got mas—mas——" He struggled an in- t with the word, then abandoned the effort to produce it, hurried on. "He's got it," he added, "an' it hurts. His ner's wif him now, so he don't need me, an' he's better. day we let the pho-no-graph play ewewyfung it knew for 'cos it hurt."

congratulated myself warmly upon the fact that my little bbor was past the need of this particular alleviation of suffering—a phonograph playing everything it knew in next room was not, I felt sure, the solace that my in- d ear required, whatever it might have done for Willie well. Then it occurred to me that I was allowing the en of the present entertainment to rest entirely on my l guest. He had stopped talking, but sat before me ly at his ease, his brown eyes touching other objects in room from time to time, but always returning to my

His hands lay folded in his lap. The rose on his st rose and fell with his quiet breathing. From the top is curly head to the sandals on his crossed feet he pre- ed a soul-satisfying picture of the ideal visitor to a sick- n. Moreover, he had not asked once whether I felt a p pain behind my ear.

return for all this, what could I do for him? I had et no flowers to give him, no picture-books to show him. Do you like stories?" I asked him. He made one eecstatic ee in his chair; then, remembering where he was, quieted n again and merely looked at me with shining eyes.

Oh-h-h!" he cried, softly. "You bet I do."

ven as the words fell from his innocent lips he stopped, ace flushing, and hung his head.

mean I do," he added, much abashed. "I'm not 'lowed ay 'you bet,' but sometimes it slips out. Do you know ies? Can you tell any?"

know so many stories," I assured him, solemnly, "that

if I began now and told you a story every day you might be a big man with whiskers before I got through."

He leaned forward in his chair, drawing a long breath. "Oh-h-h!" he said again, and there was eloquence in the word. "Will you tell me one, please? Right straight off, 'thout waiting? 'Cause I can only stay till supper, an' it's 'most supper now. An' after supper," he added, with poignant regret, "I always have to go to bed."

I began with Jack the Giant-killer, to which he listened with breathless attention, interspersed by delighted gasps and gurgles at exciting crises in the tale. When I finished, he was on the extreme edge of his chair, holding to it with both hands, and pale with excitement; but he recalled himself sternly to the present, and, unpinning his flower, held it out to me.

"I'm going to give you my wose," he said, firmly.

I hesitated.

"Please take it," he begged. "Take the pin, too, 'cause you haven't got any."

I thanked him warmly and pinned the flower to my nightgown, feeling like a prima donna receiving floral tributes as a reward for her art. My audience followed the operation with respectful attention.

"Can you tell one single 'nother stowry before I have to go?" he asked, after it was concluded. And he added, his head to one side, his smile shy and deprecating, "Just a *little* one?"

I told him the stories of Hop-o'-My-Thumb and Red Riding-Hood, and finally, deciding that he needed something less exciting than these strenuous episodes, the old Andersen story of the little gray-eyed mermaid who came to play with the land child. Toward the end of this he was so quiet that I knew he had fallen asleep.⁹ I went on talking, however, afraid that if I stopped he would *wake*, and using the opportunity to observe him more closely than I had yet done. As I studied him my heart sank, for I was beginning to realize why he "lived" at the hospital. His long lashes lay on cheeks which seemed waxen in the fading light, and his

THE COMFORTER

little legs, though plump, had the same odd pallor. Moreover, there were unchildish lines in his face when he was in repose—lines evidently etched there by pain.¹⁰

Miss Smith came back¹¹ while my heroine was vainly searching the shores of the Baltic for the playmate who would never return. For an instant she stood at the door, looking at the tableau we presented, her cold face softening wonderfully.¹² Then, uttering an inarticulate note of tenderness, she came to us and bent over the Comforter.

"He's asleep," she cooed, and I would not have known her voice. "Bless his little heart! Isn't he the sweetest thing you ever saw in your life?"

She knelt before him and gathered him into her arms, kissing the eyes he opened drowsily.

"Time for supper, Harry," she murmured, "and for bed. Wake up. Say good night to your new friend, and then I'll take you to your own room."

The Comforter sighed, smiled, buried his yellow head in her neck for a moment, in delicate intimation that he did not care to be disturbed, and finally, as she continued to urge him, aroused himself and got down wearily from his chair.

"Good night," he said, turning a sleepy smile on me. "Thank you for the stowies." He put out his hand, which I held for an instant.

"Good night, Harry," I said. "Thank you for coming to comfort me."

"I'll come often," promised Harry, drowsily, as "Miss Smiff" bore him away.

The door closed behind them, then re-opened, and Harry's bobbing curls appeared again. "They were *nice* stowies," he said, and after this final tribute he departed for the night.¹³

"Miss Smiff" returned in a few minutes, and subsequent proceedings in the sick-room seemed more interesting to her than to me. As she directed a stream of very hot water into my ear she sought to divert my mind by chatting about the Comforter. I learned that he had been in the hospital three years, coming originally as a charity patient from a reek-

ing, poverty-stricken tenement. His disease was a rare one, with a long medical name, new and meaningless to me. He needed special care and treatment, such as he could not receive in the home of the aunt who had taken him in when he was orphaned, and who had five children of her own. So the hospital people had kept him, Miss Smith explained, and he had become the idol of doctors and nurses. His language, which did not suggest a tenement influence, they had taught him. I gathered that their own had improved in the process, that the use of slang and careless speech in his hearing was forbidden, and that Harry had also benefited by frequent and intimate association with the better class of patients.

"His aunt was glad to be relieved of the responsibility of him," Miss Smith added. "But we cast our bread on the waters when we took him in. He's the joy of our lives and of this hospital. He does more for the patients than any of us. But—we can't save him."¹⁴

"Can't save him?" I found myself repeating her words stupidly.

"He was doomed when he came into the world. It's a matter of months now," she added, and her cold eyes filled.

"Does he suffer?" I hardly dared ask the question.

"Only during acute attacks. He's very well and happy the rest of the time. His little nursery is full of toys the doctors bring him. We nurses buy his clothes, his rompers and sandals and underwear and stockings. He has four times as much as he needs, because every time one of us sees anything for a little¹⁵ boy——" She stopped suddenly and busied herself with the apparatus, keeping her back toward me.

"He's the most useful member of the staff," she continued, after a long silence. "He can do more with the children, of course, than any of us. In an eye-and-ear-and-throat hospital there is much done that frightens children. But Harry can always quiet them. You'll think it's because we all adore him that we consider him so wonderful. But wait till you know him better."

I knew him better very soon.¹⁶ Early the next morning,

THE COMFORTER

when my breakfast-tray had been removed and the nurse's duties attended to, my door opened very slowly and quietly, after a little tap on its outer panel, and the Comforter entered again. He was in pink this time—pink rompers and short pink stockings—and a pink rose lay upon his breast. The color gave him a little color of his own. For the ceremony which followed I was not prepared. He strode to the bedside with his chest expanded and a pompous step, took a toy watch out of his breast pocket, held it in his left hand, and kept his eyes fastened solemnly upon it while he laid the fingers of his right hand upon my pulse. Then he nodded slowly, his bobbing curls lending emphasis to his approval.

"You'll do," he said, briskly; "feeling all right, eh?" And restoring his watch to his pocket, he looked at me with an expansive grin which revealed both his upper and lower teeth.

The episode was such a flawless imitation of the early morning visit of the house surgeon that I was inwardly convulsed; but Miss Smith, who had entered in time to witness the end of the scene, shook her head at me so warningly that I dared not laugh. Later she explained to me that Harry could imitate with equal fidelity every doctor and nurse in the hospital, but that no attention was ever paid to this rather questionable talent, so the child remained serenely unconscious¹⁷ of anything amusing in his frequent impersonations.

"I was going to give you my wose," Harry remarked at the conclusion of his "examination." "But you've got some of your vewy own, haven't you? You've got lots."

He came to my table and stood still before it, his brown eyes fixed on the great masses of roses the nurse had just arranged. Suddenly he was all child again.

"May I smell some of them?" he asked, eagerly. "May I put my nose right *on* them?"

I lifted the pitcher and vases in turn and held them before him while he buried his face in the flowers and stood very still, inhaling deeply.

"Sometimes woses come out of dirt, in pots," he observed,

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

after he was perched on his chair. "But most times they live in water. Willie's got f'owers this morning, too," he went on, after I had acknowledged his botanical information. "An' Mrs. Gwey's got some down on the other side of the hall. Willie has pink woses, an' Mrs. Gwey's got wed ones. You've got white ones, too, haven't you?"

"Yes," I said. "I like white roses best. These are the kind that grow in pots. I like those that grow in the country, and smell sweeter than any others."

"What's the countwy?"

I explained, and in a few moments more found myself deep in a description of a beloved old farm I had often visited. He listened in ecstatic silence, his brown eyes never leaving my face. Then, in his turn, he told me of his hospital life, his toys and friends, his favorite doctors and nurses. They all seemed to be his favorites. He spent, it seemed, much of his time in the wing which contained private rooms, and incidentally his own nursery. Every afternoon he took a long nap. But it was plain that any frightened child anywhere in the great building could have the Comforter in his hour of need; and twice a day, morning and afternoon, he went through the free wards, stopping at the different beds to chat with and cheer children and grown-ups alike. It was a strange life for a child, I reflected. But what it had made¹⁸ of him!—a man, at times, in tact and understanding, with the joyousness and simplicity of the child.

"I've never been in a boat," he said, suddenly. "And I've never been to the 'Quarimum. But some day I'm going."

"The 'Quarimum?" I said, thoughtlessly.

"Yes. Where the fishes all are. They swim wound the glass places, an' you see them."

"Oh yes, the Aquarium. I'll take you¹⁹ for a boat-ride sometime, if you like, when I get well," I promised, "and to the Aquarium, too."

"Oh-h-h, *will* you? When?"

"Next week. Do you know when that is?"

THE COMFORTER

He sighed. "It sounds a long way off. How many times do I go to bed before then?"

I reflected. The doctors had said I could leave in three days more.

"Only four times," I said. I took his small hand and emphasized the count on his fingers. "This time, and this time, and this time, and this time. Then we go."

He drew a breath of deep content. "It's soon," he said.

We were deep in the discussion of this delight when "Miss Smiff" came to take the Comforter away to some little girl with bandaged eyes, who seemed to be seeing "lions an' tigers an' el'phan's" in the dark. Harry answered the summons as a war-horse responds to the compelling notes of the trumpet. In an instant he was off his chair and trotting toward the door, where, for a second only, he paused. "I'll come again," he promised, but I saw him no more that day.²⁰

It was not as casual a matter to pick up the Comforter and carry him off to the Aquarium as I had imagined it would be. Indeed, I found my plan passed on from one high authority to another. The question of risking my life in the operating-room could have been lightly and quickly settled; but to take the hospital's idol down-town for a pleasure excursion was a serious matter, requiring reflection.²¹

At last, however, it was arranged. I was to call for my small guest in a taxicab at eleven in the morning and drive him directly to the Aquarium, afterward giving him a luncheon suited to his health and tender years, and finally taking him around New York on the yacht which makes that voyage every afternoon during the season.²² These details arranged, the Comforter and I awaited with such patience as we could the eventful day of the excursion. But during the three days' wait, which seemed so long, the small boy never for one moment lost interest in his other friends, his daily rounds, or his duties toward his fellow-patients. Every morning he came to see me immediately after breakfast, and through him, unconscious reporter that he was, I learned that Willie Maxwell had left the hospital "just as well as he could be"; that Mrs.

Grey had "dreadful pains and groaned"; that there was a new little girl in 19, with her eyes all bandaged; and that Jimmie Murphy, a prime favorite of Harry's in the charity ward, had "gone to live with God."

Incidentally, besides playing his own small rôle to perfection, Harry became in turn the superintendent, the house physician, various nurses, and even some of the patients. Thus I was privileged to behold Willie Maxwell enjoying the phonograph; while the Comforter's impersonation of "Mrs. Gwey having a hard pain" greatly comforted that lady when she was well enough to witness it.

My farewell with Harry was highly dramatic; we were separating for twenty-four long hours.

"I only go to bed one more time before we see the 'Quarium,'" were his parting words.

That night I dreamed of the Comforter, and I was back in the hospital before eleven the next day. With equal promptness my young friend presented himself, ready for the excursion. He wore a jaunty blue reefer, a blue cap, and a somewhat flamboyant tie, the latter pinned on him in a jocund moment by the nurse who had dressed him for his outing. The inevitable rose was on his breast.²³ He had never before been in a taxi-cab, and as we rode away I was forced to give him a scientific explanation of how and why our cab went—an explanation which I realized at the time would always be a rosy memory to our chauffeur.²⁴

Of the Comforter in the Aquarium I can show no fitting picture. But in memory I see him still, a flash of sunshine rimmed with blue, awestruck before the huge, sleepy alligators, thrilled to the soul by the green moray, fixed and ecstatic in front of the crabs that walked sideways when they were not fighting with one another, and drawing deep breaths of excitement over the fish that changed colors as one watched. He thought the turtles were the most wonderful things there, until he saw the swordfish, but the fascination of the swordfish paled in turn before the charm of the sea-lions. In front of these he jumped up and down in such uncontrollable delight

PROPERTY OF
DAVID
1911

THE COMFORTER

every one within sight and hearing smiled in sympathy with him. Also, he became at times Dr. Reynolds gazing at the eel and rubbing his chin; Dr. Murray twirling his mustache in deep reflection before the case of a giant shark; and Miss Murphy, a hospital scrub-woman, surveying the eels with her arms akimbo. Each pose was wholly unconscious, but I had seen his originals!²⁵

In fifteen minutes all the other visitors in the "'Quarimum"' had forgotten the fish and concentrated their attention on the Comforter.²⁶ In half an hour they were following him around, listening to his comments. Within an hour they had learned to love him and were extracting from me, by pointed questions, the simple story of his life.

It was hard to tear him away at one o'clock, but the charms of the luncheon soothed his disappointment, and the boat-trip was yet to come.

On the yacht the reaction came, after this high entertainment, and for the first half-hour Harry sat quietly by my side, his eyes very big and bright, his cheeks pink with excitement, and occasionally deeply breathed "O-h-h!" his only comment, as the shore-lines and buildings swept past. It was not long before other passengers began to talk to him, and I recall especially the gentleness with which a certain irascible old man conceded that a pink-and-gold cloud in the west might possibly be part of heaven, with Jimmie Murphy reposing on it.²⁷

Returning up-town in our taxi-cab when the day was over, Harry sat very close to me on the back seat, his head resting on my shoulder and his eyes closed. At first I thought he was asleep, but as he broke the silence from time to time with a murmured word about the fish, or the boat, or some other thought of the day, I learned that he was merely busy with the review of memory. When we reached the hospital he was lifted out of the cab by a waiting orderly, and carried off to his room to have his evening meal luxuriously in bed; and as the two disappeared through the big front doors, reminis-

cences of eels, sea-lions, and alligators were still floating back to me.²⁸

Twice in the busy month that followed²⁹ I saw the Comforter, making the long up-town journey to the hospital for an hour with the boy. Both times he was full of happy memories of our outing, of which I had given him, as a souvenir, a "'quarimum" of his own—a glass globe with three goldfish in it. We planned also another jaunt, which should include hay-rides and hens laying eggs and a whole month at the old farm³⁰ during the summer heat; but this was not to be.

At six o'clock one morning, a week after my second visit³¹ to the Comforter, I was awakened by the bell of the telephone beside my bed. When I took up the receiver the voice of Miss Smith came to my ear. It was low, but quite steady. Harry had died a few hours before, she told me, and she thought I might care to come up to the hospital and see him.

There was little I could say to her, except that I would come; but when I laid down the receiver and rose to dress, I found myself facing a world which suddenly seemed appallingly empty because it lacked the presence of a little boy³² in blue rompers, with bobbing yellow curls.

It was barely eight o'clock when I opened the familiar hospital door and received the depressed greetings of the clerk at the inquiry-desk, who knew why I had come, and of the elevator-man, who took me up to my old floor. Miss Smith was leaving Harry's nursery as I reached it. Her features twisted as our eyes met. With a silent hand-clasp she turned and went back with me.

The room, usually flooded with sunshine at that hour, was darkened now by drawn shades. On the floor lay the Comforter's toys, just as he had left them the day before. A wooden hobby-horse stood near the door. Two brave companies of lead soldiers, drawn up in battle array, stretched from the wall to the foot of his little white bed. A boat I had given him rode at anchor in a tin bath-tub filled with water, and beside it was the "'quarimum," its goldfish swimming about in calm content. Outside the windows chirped

THE COMFORTER

the sparrows Harry had loved to feed. On the bed a silent, exquisite little figure lay under a white counterpane, covered with pink roses. Speechless, I bent over it, while Miss Smith gazed with wet eyes at her boy.³³

"We must think of how much suffering he has been spared," she said at last. "We must remember that we made him happy. We did make him happy," she added, softly, "for we loved him, and he knew it."

She touched the little hands almost hidden by the roses.

"You knew, didn't you, Harry?" she whispered.

The sparrows still chirped demandingly, for it was the hour when Harry had fed them. Somewhere, far down the corridor, a child was crying ³⁴—perhaps in terror of visions in the dark. But under his pink roses the Comforter slept on, a little smile puckering the corners of his mouth, as if indeed he knew.³⁵

ELIZABETH JORDAN

Elizabeth Jordan was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 9, 1867. In her early years she gave promise of authorship, a promise interestingly reflected in "I Write a Play" and "Olive's First Story." She was graduated at the Convent of Notre Dame, Milwaukee, having suffered and enjoyed a number of experiences which she later utilized in "May Iverson—Her Book."

Having gone to New York about the age of twenty, Miss Jordan made good on the editorial staff of the *World*. There for ten years she served her apprenticeship to letters, remaining three years longer as assistant Sunday editor. This period was one of preparation for her best literary work: in it the girl from the West learned the art and the business of writing.

In 1900 she accepted the editorship of *Harper's Bazaar*, a position she has filled with eminent success. Recently, having become connected with a Motion Picture Company, Miss Jordan is advising and editing, as she formerly advised and edited for Harper and Brothers.

Miss Jordan numbers among her friends men, women and children of many classes and types. One of the literary coterie of New York, she occupies herself with professional and social activities. At the same time, she is never too busy to encourage an ambitious young woman or to warn her of the difficulties in the road to success.

If the student of this text has followed so far the lives of the men and women here represented, he must have observed that the work of an author is a direct outgrowth of experience. The best story teller gathers material out of his own life and the environments he has known, and in his work faithfully reflects the changes of time and place. This is particularly

true of Miss Jordan. Her first volume of stories to be widely received, a book as popular in Mississippi and Maine as in Michigan, was "May Iverson—Her Book." Published in 1904, it still remains in general opinion her leading work. The sequels, "May Iverson Tackles Life," and "May Iverson's Career," containing stories of the same excellent technique, are preferred by some readers. The collection, "Tales of the City Room" (1898), consists of stories growing out of her early journalistic career. The group in "Tales of Destiny," illustrated in such a narrative as "The Voice in the World of Pain," bears witness to the author's extended spiritual development and to her interest in the psychic. "Lovers' Knots," published in 1916, testifies to her sure lightness of touch in handling the more superficial aspects of the social world.

This writer has also found time to produce a drama, "The Lady from Oklahoma" having been produced first in 1911.

Her range is wide, as her life has been filled with varied incident. But whether her locale is the convent or the city room or a château in France she displays always the ability to see her story, to tell it clearly, and with a directness which brooks no turning aside in delivering the narrative. She is possessed of a rich humor, which renders engrossing most of her writing. The dominant pathos in the present story, which is chosen for the sympathetic character presentation of "The Comforter," is but the counterpart of that leavening humor.

Other stories for children, chiefly for older children:

"The Conspiracy Aboard the *Midas*," by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (In "The Delectable Duchy").

"Wee Willie Winkie," by Rudyard Kipling (In "Under the Deodars").

"Ardelia in Arcady," by Josephine Daskam Bacon (In "The Madness of Philip and Other Stories").

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

- "Sara Crewe," by Frances Hodgson Burnett (In "Sara Crewe and Other Stories").
- "The Dollivers Caught Napping," by Margaret Cameron Lewis (In "The Golden Rule Dollivers").
- "At Home," by Anton Tchekhoff (In "The Black Monk").
- "The Sabots of Little Wolff," by François Coppée (In "Ten Tales").
- "The Death of the Dauphin," by Alphonse Daudet (In "Letters From My Mill").
- "The Feel Doll," by Annie Hamilton Donnell (In "Rebecca Mary").
- "Little Lucy Rose," by Mary E. W. Freeman (In "The Copy-Cat").
- "The Burglars," by Kenneth Grahame (In "The Golden Age").
- "A White Heron," by Sarah O. Jewett (In "A White Heron").
- "The Unlived Life of Little Mary Ellen," by Ruth McEnergy Stuart (In "In Simpkinsville").

Other stories by Miss Jordan:

- "Adeline Thurston, Poetess," "First Aid to Kitty James," "Kitty's Sister Josephine" (In "May Iverson").
- "The Reduction Cure for Kitty James," "I Write a Play," "Woman Suffrage at Saint Catharine's" (In "May Iverson Tackles Life").
- "Philip's 'Furnis Man'" (In "Lovers' Knots").

“MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN”

BY FREDERICK STUART GREENE

General Tazewell entered his office and, humming a tune slightly off the key, searched rapidly through his morning mail. Reaching the last envelope, he clucked softly, and followed the odd sound by a prolonged, gently breathed “Ah-h!”

“I wonder,” he said aloud, “what’s wrong with my friend Molly, Fourteen.¹ This is the first alumni day in nine, yes, ten years, that he’s failed to report.”

Edward Tazewell, superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, looked years younger than his friends knew him to be. On this June morning, trim in white uniform, his shoulders held, as always, well back, he did not appear a day above fifty. A rustle of skirts interrupted the general’s thoughts. He rose quickly, standing at attention.

“Has it come, Colonel?” He had held that rank during their courtship, and Mrs. Tazewell seldom used the higher title.

“No, my dear; his letter is not here.”

“Well, don’t be disappointed; the institute doesn’t need the money.” Mrs. Tazewell had a brisk, cheerful way of speaking.

“I don’t care a hang about the money, Evelyn; I want to see him make good. To have him fail now would hurt.”

“Perhaps the mail is late.” She glanced at the clock. “My gracious! They’ll all be down in a minute, and I haven’t told Lydia about the waffles.”² At the door she stopped and asked eagerly, “Is it all right about Mr. Duval?”³

“I think it will be; the board is to decide his case to-day.”

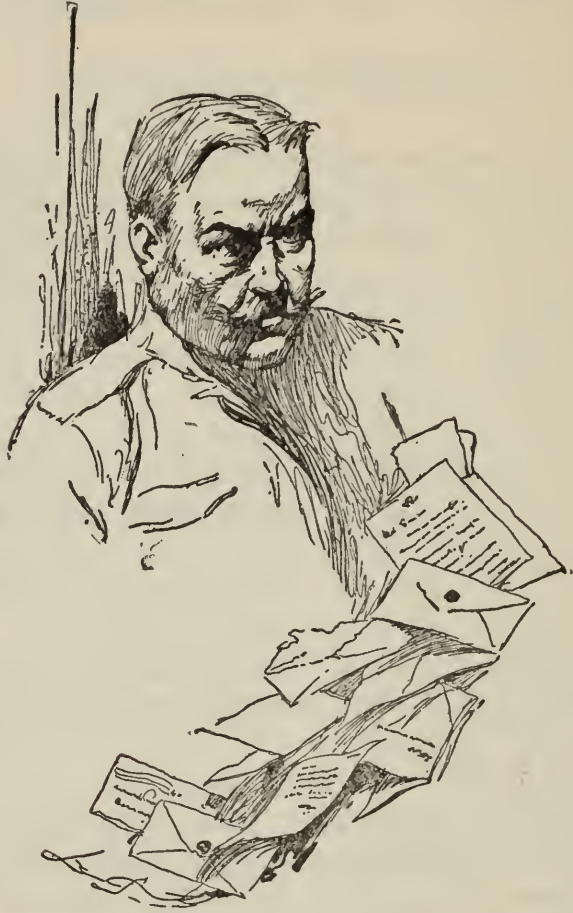
“Edward, they just must agree!” Mrs. Tazewell declared.

The general joined her.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"I believe you are more concerned about Duval than I am about Fourteen's letter. I've been too busy to read Mrs Duval's note. Did it please you?"

She took his arm and drew him out through the wide doorway to the porch.



"Oh, it must mean so much to the old cadets to feel that they are a part of all this!" Her gesture took in the level acres of the parade-ground, glimmering brilliant green under the morning sun. Beyond, the mountains stretched mile after mile, an unbroken chain of rugged, blue peaks.⁴

The general smiled into her glowing face.

"They can't all see it with your bright eyes, Evelyn," he said, and not one of the six hundred cadets under his command

hand would have recognized his voice. “But tell me about Mrs. Duval’s letter.”

“Every sentence in it has a nice, whimsical twist. I know shall like her.”

“You were careful to say I could make no definite promise?” the general asked seriously.

“Indeed I was. She has not told her husband a word about what we hope the board will do; she has persuaded him to come just to please her.”

“How about Duval’s mother?”

“I’m not going to tell that dear old lady a word until everything is settled. She can reach here in four hours.” Mrs. Tazewell held up her hand. “Listen!” From far down the alley came faintly the sound of a whistle. “That’s the Richmond train. I feel sure it will bring Fourteen’s letter.” She turned quickly. “Gracious! I’ve forgotten all about Lydia!”

Finals⁵ were in full swing, the most trying time of the year for the general and his wife, a week of morning drills, review and parade at sundown, and dances at night, at which they must at least appear. The small college town was jammed to the last attic-room with fathers and mothers of the cadets, with all of whom the general must shake hands. His own home was crowded with officials from Washington and Richmond. In his big heart General Tazewell liked all this gay turmoil; the knotted contour of his forehead had come from concentration upon higher mathematics, not from impatience.

Later that morning,⁶ when Mrs. Tazewell had poured coffee from her ancient silver urn for her many guests, an orderly entered, and placed a letter before the general. He glanced at the large envelope, but put it aside unopened.

“Oh, Colonel, please!” Mrs. Tazewell smiled down the long table. “Won’t you all let him just take one look? We’re so anxious for a certain letter to-day!”

The superintendent opened the envelop.

“Great Scott, General! do you get them like that every day?”

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Mrs. Tazewell sprang to her feet. "There! I knew Fourteen would not fail you!"

Two one-thousand-dollar bills had fallen from the opened envelop, and though the general did not smile, content showed in his homely face.

"Now the day is nearly perfect," Mrs. Tazewell said to the distinguished guest on her right, no less a personage than the chief of staff of the United States Army.⁷

"With such a windfall, Madam, and such waffles, I should call the day entirely perfect," the officer answered.

Given unlimited funds to spend, it would still be impossible to build another institution that could have the spirit of V. M. I.⁸ That collection of historic buildings dominated by the war-scarred barracks, the parade-ground on which Jackson and Lee reviewed the cadets, the library filled with records and portraits of the institute's battle-famed sons, the grounds studded with war-trophies—all these give to the little kingdom tucked away in the heart of the Blue Ridge traditions that are unique.

To an outsider the officers will speak of the Battle of New Market, that red-hot engagement in the valley where the V. M. I. battalion made its charge. With sparkling eyes they tell how those boys—pitifully young boys, called in the dying hours of the Confederacy—waited from daybreak, fretting to go under fire; how they steadily worked their way forward reaching the front late in the afternoon, and charged in perfect formation through a straggling regiment of beaten, retreating veterans. They will describe that steady rush across the open wheat-field straight into a driving hail of Minié balls, while shells, bursting above, tore ragged gaps in the ranks; how without disorder, those gaps were closed, and finally, with a rebel yell ringing shrilly from their young throats, the battalion plunged up the hill, captured the battery, and put the enemy to flight.

With eyes that do not sparkle they tell more: how, of that band of two hundred and seventy-nine, fifty-seven boys fell wounded and dead on that shot-torn field.

“MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN”

If you still show interest, you may hear that Stonewall Jackson was an officer of the institute; how in a day after Virginia had seceded he changed from an eccentric professor to an inspired soldier, and, gathering a company of the older cadets, seized a canal-boat packet, and floated down the James to Richmond and undying glory.

And there is Lincoln's answer to the impatient statesman who demanded to know why the Federal Army took so long to put down a starving nation.

“We could do it in a month,” the great man told him, “were it not for a troublesome little school down in Virginia that turns out new officers as fast as we kill off the old ones.”

These are only three out of the many traditions that the outsider may find set down in the printed history of the old school; but others are known to the insider, and chief among the secret ones are the acts of that mysterious band, the Molly McGuires.⁹ Who the members of this carefully selected organization were none save a duly initiated Molly ever knew; but every one connected with the college, from the negroes who swept the long barracks galleries up to the superintendent himself, knew that the sole aim of this clan was to make life interesting for the officers and faculty.

Being in intimate touch with military affairs and gunpowder, Molly McGuire's favorite means of expressing himself was through an explosion, and the greatest of their many ingenious plots was the blowing up of the arsenal. Though this was carried out twenty years ago, you, if you are an insider, will hear talk of it to this day.

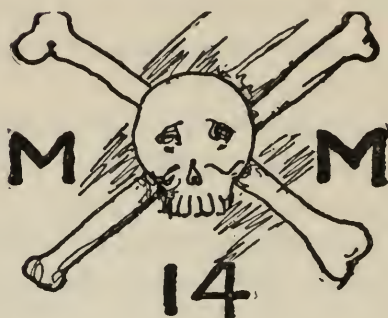
From the fog of secrecy that shrouded the band only these facts drifted clear from the mist: it was formed of boys who could pass some difficult test; it numbered thirteen, never more or less.

After breakfast on that alumni day the general asked himself, as he had countless times before, which one of the hundreds in the corps when the arsenal blew up was the mysterious person who for ten years, without a break, had

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

written to him. Always his letters contained a cash remittance, and always the last page had been signed,

Gratefully yours,



Heaven knows the skull and cross-bones with the two M's were familiar enough. Evidently it was a law of the Molly to leave these insignia marked in red somewhere near the spot where one of their bombs had been exploded, and the number of the member who had lighted the fuse was added as a final touch of bravado. The general had seen the sign numbered from one to thirteen at many places in and out of barracks, but nowhere except on these annual letters had he found the number fourteen. He thought that he knew who had blown up that arsenal. The present finals marked the twentieth reunion of the "Arsenal Class," and one of the first returning members to report at alumni headquarters had been Bolling,¹⁰ the man he suspected. The general had recognized him at first glance, though his once black hair was streaked with gray. As their hands clasped and each looked steadily into the eye of the other, the general sounded his friendly cluck and then said, with his broadest smile:

"Ah-h, Bolling, too bad we haven't another arsenal ready for you."

Bolling, true to cadet ethics, which reveals nothing to members of the faculty, had neither denied nor admitted the implied compliment. Now, while going to meet his board of visitors, the general began to doubt. But if not Bolling, who? He reviewed in memory every member of Bolling's class.

here were a dozen boys of that year who had sufficient daring; besides, there was always the chance that some member of another class might be guilty. The general dismissed the problem.¹¹ He had the Duval affair to discuss now, and opening the council-room door, he saluted the members of his august board.

The conference lasted the better part of an hour, but when the superintendent left the room he was smiling. With the spring his step still held he crossed the parade-ground and signaled to his wife when he passed her on the porch. Mrs. Tazewell left her guests, and hurried to join him in his office.

“Tell me quickly, did they agree?” she asked eagerly.

The general began a very creditable jig step, smiling at her while. It was a boyish trick he allowed himself when well pleased and sure that no cadet was within range.

Mrs. Tazewell put both hands upon his shoulders.

“Now, everything is just right,” she said happily.

The general’s jig came to an end.

“But why aren’t they here? I wouldn’t have Duval missals now on any account.”

“He’ll be here on time. Mrs. Duval telephoned from Staunton; they’re coming by motor.”

“Well, you can now safely notify his mother; she’ll have to make an early start to-morrow.” He followed his wife to the porch; when she was about to open it, the general took both her hands. “Evelyn,” he said slowly, “we are two very happy people, aren’t we?”

She showed that she held full partnership in his happiness, and they left the room together.

“Luncheon will be a little late,” Mrs. Tazewell said to her guests; “we’re waiting for some new-comers, the Duvals. It’s the twentieth reunion¹² of Mr. Duval’s class, and he’s bringing his wife, who was a New England girl, I believe.”

She was still talking of the Duvals when a motor, rounding the corner of barracks, turned into the drive leading to headquarters. The general rose, and walked down the brick path-way.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"Welcome, Duval!" he called, then paused. Was this determined-looking man the dreamy boy he had known?

The new arrival sprang from the car, and saluted in old cadet fashion. A tall, well-knit man, he held himself with military straightness. One look into his frank eyes ended the superintendent's uncertainty.

"I've come to report for duty, General." Duval's voice had a pleasant ring.

"We've waited twenty years to have you, my boy," the general answered, and their hands gripped hard.

"I'm glad to be back. It's good to see the old place again and it's good to see you, General." Holding the superintendent's hand, Duval looked toward barracks. "I'm glad she made me come," he said, as if thinking aloud, and with a note of the old shyness the general had not forgotten. During those moments they stood together he studied Duval, and was not disappointed.

"Here, you scamp, I have no more time to waste on you," he said, and turned to Mrs. Duval, helping her from the car.

"Ah, Madam," he said and bowed, "I see New England is to be charmingly represented at our finals." The general liked her thoughtful gray eyes.

Mrs. Duval blushed.

"If I had known what I've been missing, I should have persuaded my husband to bring me here years ago." She gave him a quick smile. "Is that the proper answer to a Virginian's greeting? But tell me, General, has he changed?"

"Attention, Peyton Duval!"

Duval straightened.

"Ready for inspection, sir," he said, a smile easing the firm line of his mouth.

"I'd have known him anywhere by that studious look. But you, man, you must be a good two inches taller than when you graduated." The general stopped abruptly; he had caught the quick flush¹³ in Duval's face. He was relieved to hear his wife's voice.

"I couldn't let the Colonel keep you away from me and

onger,” she said, shaking hands with Duval. She turned to Mrs. Duval, saying, “I believe your husband was his favorite cadet.”

She took her guest’s arm, and all four walked toward the house. Before reaching the porch the general saw Mrs. Tazewell lean close to her companion; though he caught no word of the hastily whispered sentence, Mrs. Duval’s glance toward her husband told him what had been said.

During the introductions he noticed that Duval drew immediate attention. His manner, even during this trivial observance, left an impression of quiet strength. Later, the chief of staff said:

“Yes, General, I get the same idea. That line from ear to chin is strong. He looks like a man who finishes things, and I’ll wager he prefers the hard jobs.”

After luncheon the superintendent found opportunity to ask a question that had long puzzled him. All the guests had left the house except Mrs. Duval, who had stayed behind at his request.

“Come into my office, you two girls,” he said, his eyes twinkling, “and we will complete the plans of our conspiracy.”¹⁴

When they were seated, Mrs. Duval leaned toward the general, and her earnestness showed how much this interview meant to her.

“I don’t know how to thank you for all—all you have done for Peyton. It will mean, oh, so much to him! More than he has ever admitted even to me.”

Her voice broke, and the general flashed an appeal to his wife. Mrs. Tazewell moved to a seat close beside her guest and said:

“Nothing the colonel has done all this year has given him half so much happiness.” She took in her own the tightly clasped hands in Mrs. Duval’s lap.

The general’s softest “Ah-h!” followed an embarrassed look.

“Will you permit a question?” he said gently. “When I

recall Duval's fine record until—until that unfortunate day,¹⁵ I've asked myself a thousand times, Why, in the very hour, he did that—that incredible thing?"

Mrs. Duval hesitated before answering.

"It is almost impossible to explain; something we women, Mrs. Tazewell, can never quite understand."

"Ah-h, then he has told you his motive?"

"Oh, many times! He said that he hated being called 'Demeritless Duby.' He had grown tired of hearing how easily he took calculus and analytical geometry. He longed, he told me, to be known as a daredevil, if for only just once. Mrs. Duval looked appealingly at the superintendent. "Can you possibly understand it at all?"

"Yes, I can understand," the general answered thoughtfully. "I could understand it better, however, in some other boy, for Duval was the one man of that daredevil class never in scrape of any kind." The general remained silent for some moments, his brow knotted in deeper ridges. Then suddenly he rose.

"I have it!" he exclaimed.

"What is it, Colonel?" Mrs. Tazewell asked.

"I've just found out, my dear, that your husband has been blind to several things for a very long time." He turned to Mrs. Duval with keener interest. "What else did he tell you?"

"He has often said that he wanted to be a Molly McGuire. That name doesn't sound daredevilish, though, does it?"

General Tazewell chuckled softly.

"Evelyn, you would never think to see him now that he was once dreamy, shy, always keeping in the background except in studies. But Duval a Molly!" A smile smoothed the superintendent's mathematical brow. "Impossible! So he did that fatal thing because he wanted his classmates to think him a daredevil?"

The conspirators remained in session until the call for review, sounding across the parade-ground, ended the conference. Then three contented people left the general's office. But Mrs. Tazewell made one last protest.

“Colonel, I think it’s mean. Can’t Mrs. Duval give him just one little hint?”

“No, Evelyn.” The general tried to look stern. “The board has given orders that only we three are to know what’s going to happen.”

The biggest day¹⁶ in all the year at V. M. I. is alumni day, and the biggest parade of her many parades is the alumni review. It is the only formation that permits the mother to hold in one great embrace her sons of to-day and her sons of yesterday, and yesterday on back through the years. Once in a year, on a golden day in June, she gathers her children; and all, from the boys still under her care to the gray, age-worn men long gone from it, thrill with loyal memories at her call.

Under the maples bordering the parade-ground is gathered a great throng, a happy, expectant crowd of mothers and fathers, sisters and sweethearts of the cadets, impatient younger brothers, longing for the day when they may take their place in the ranks.

A hundred feet beyond the maples, well out on the field, another crowd is waiting, a long double line of men. The superintendent and staff are on their right, he and his aides arrayed in the splendor of full dress, gold-colored and tasseled. At the general’s left stands the oldest of V. M. I.’s sons; from here on down that waiting line age runs the scale. The extreme left is flanked by the youngsters only last year released. These last joke and laugh, a bit self-conscious in this great gathering of the family.

The ringing notes of a bugle sound from the sally-port. Instantly six hundred cadets come to rigid attention. The captains’ swords leap from scabbards. Drums beat a short sharp roll, and Company A comes swinging into view. In perfect step, with every musket held at precise angle, these boys stride over the close-cut turf. Following Company A, another and another come through the sally-port, until the world seems crowded with high-strung, manly lads, marching inspired to the stirring strains of “Dixie.”

The crowd under the maples, edging forward, breaks into

applause. Every head in that double line out on the field is thrown high, every shoulder stiffens. Now and again, above the applause a rebel yell is cried. Often it comes in rusty tone from some old boy no longer able to hold himself in check.

One after another the companies halt. When all are in place, the gray coats stretch in two long lines from end to end across the broad field.

"Present arms!" is called, and six hundred pieces snap to salute before the alumni.

The band crashes out once more, and "Dixie" gives place to "Maryland, My Maryland"; but now the time is not so fast, for the old boys are to have their turn at marching, and the mother remembers that many of them are in truth old boys. The general and his staff step off; behind them, his snow-white head held high, follows a man walking alone. He is dressed all in gray, and his uncertain step is steadied by a long staff of mountain laurel. He is the only one left of 1859, but he carries for his alma mater a love still young in his eighty-year-old heart. There is a gap behind him, for the institute has lost all her sons of '60. Then come two old men, supporting a third between them. These wish it known that '61 has not forgotten, so they march with their war-maimed brother, who refuses to be left standing like a crane behind. What matters if one leg lies buried at Seven Pines. He *will* march.

Slowly passes this record of the years; from its tottering front ranks of the men of yesterday, through its steady center of the men of to-day, on to the rear-guard of eager, ambitious youth, the old cadets march on. The long column circles about their young brothers and returns, with faces aglow, hearts beating faster.

"Pass in review!" Again the band plays, a quickstep now, and the gray ranks, breaking front, take up their swinging stride. In straight lines, every foot striking and leaving the ground as one, company after company sweeps past the alumni, all the white trouser-legs creasing and smoothing in

PROPERTY OF
DAVID
1881

unison, as if the twelve hundred knees were being bent and straightened by machine. The colors flutter by in the June breeze, the Stars and Stripes on the right, the blue field-flag of Virginia at its left, and the men of the alumni line stand stiff at attention, every head bared.¹⁷

When the last gray-clad boy¹⁸ had passed from sight through the sally-port, the chief of staff hurried to General Tazewell.

“That’s the finest thing I’ve ever seen in a military way,” he said, wringing the superintendent’s hand.

The general flushed.

“Then our boys marched well?”

“They always do; but that review is more than marching; it’s the very essence of V. M. I. spirit, past and present, spread out a picture before us.”

The general, plainly moved, thanked the officer for his appreciation, then turned to search the crowd.

“Have you seen Duval?” he asked.

“Yes, he stayed in his car. Is he ill? His face was white, and once, just as the colors passed, I saw his wife reach over and touch his hand.”

General Tazewell was silent for a moment.

“Come to my office,” he said finally. “I’ll tell you about Duval;¹⁹ it may save you both embarrassment.”

When the superintendent had unbuckled his sword and cigars were lighted, he began speaking with more than his usual earnestness.

“Duval’s old home place, where his mother still lives, is in the adjoining county; but his interests are now so wide that he makes New York his headquarters. Of all the boys who have been here, there is not one for whom I hold a higher regard; and yet Duval is not entitled to take part in that review.”

The chief of staff, a good listener, merely bowed.

“Any man, whether he receives his degree or leaves before the four years are served, is considered an alumnus provided he left here in good standing.”

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

"But Duval surely left in good standing!"

"That's just the trouble; he didn't." The general drew thoughtfully at his cigar. "He was the youngest boy in his class and a good soldier, having no demerits charged against him; and you know, sir, that's a record hard to gain here or at West Point. Well, as you will see to-morrow, our final exercises are opened with a ceremony we have carried out for many years. In the recess back of the rostrum hangs a fine portrait of General Francis Smith, the founder, builder, and rebuilder of the institute after its destruction during the er—the unfortunate occurrences of sixty-four."

The chief of staff smiled. "You mean when General Hunter, after shelling the barracks, committed that act of vandalism of burning all your buildings to the ground."

General Tazewell bowed assent.

"This portrait," he continued, "is concealed by a curtain. After the tribute has been spoken, the audience rises, the band plays an old march that General Smith had been fond of, and the curtain is drawn slowly aside."

The army officer touched the general's arm.

"Let me interrupt you. If we in the North could be sentimental as you people down here are, without being afraid of seeming ridiculous, our institutions might gather tradition to their advantage."

Again the superintendent bowed.

"We had an unusually large crowd in Duval's year, Fitz Lee made the final address, and the rostrum was filled by dignitaries. After General Briggs, then superintendent, had spoken in memory of General Smith, the audience rose; but when the curtain was drawn the band stopped dead. For a moment a tense silence held the crowd, then from every throat came a sharp gasp, followed again by silence. The strange stillness lasted perhaps five seconds, then someone laughed; another and another took it up until the room shook with uncontrolled shouts. Briggs, who faced the audience, yelled to the drum-major for music; but the shouts of laughter rose above the band's notes. He wheeled at last and faced the pic-

ture, and I shall never forget the black look that settled on his face. It is a full-length portrait; the general is seated in deep thought at his desk; but now from the chin hung a long, bushy beard made of cotton; pasted across the calm lips were jet-black mustaches, the horse-hair ends turned fiercely up; a villainous black patch covered the left eye; and above this were heavy, cotton eyebrows. You can imagine how these decorations altered the expression of the benign old gentleman. And there was more. In front of the canvas, rigged out in a moth-eaten uniform of General Smith's,—Heaven only knows where he got it—with face made up to match the changed portrait, was seated, in the same pose, scowling in exactly the same way, a replica of our revered superintendent. Briggs reached that boy in one bound and tore away the false beard and patch. Then the figure in the ludicrously bagging uniform rose and bowed to the faculty and the hysterical audience. It was our exemplary cadet, Peyton Duval!”

The army officer put aside his cigar.²⁰

“Had he gone suddenly crazy?”

“I had some such idea until to-day,” the general answered. “But to end my account: Briggs was trembling with rage.

“Report to your room under close arrest, sir!” he ordered in his gruff rumble. And that boy, saluting with exaggerated deference, turned and marched down the aisle, through all that crowd of people, his head high and a smile of triumph on his lips.

“No”—the general paused, distress in his kind face—“no, that’s not altogether correct. I saw his mother in the audience. She sat stunned, white, no tears in her shame-stricken eyes. Duval saw her, too. He faltered when he reached her; then walked on again, his head held not so high.”

“What a fool trick! What a breach of discipline!” the chief of staff exclaimed.

“He paid for it; you saw to-day that he’s paying still.” The general remained silent for some moments. “Well, the curtain, of course, was redrawn, and later, during one of the speeches, Briggs handed a sheet of paper to the adjutant.

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

After the exercises the order that he had hastily written was read before the battalion and the crowd witnessing the last formation on the parade-ground. It was as significant as it was brief: 'Cadet Duval, for conduct unbecoming a soldier and a gentleman, is hereby dismissed from the institute.' "

"I understand now why he did not join his classmates in that impressive review," the chief of staff said.

"*Could not* join them," replied General Tazewell.

The evening events of alumni day run unfinished into the following morning.²¹ There is the superintendent's reception at headquarters, when the old mansion is filled with Southern beauties, visiting and institute officers, and a gentle hurricane of soft, slow-speaking voices. Later the old boys form on the general's broad lawn, and, with the band leading, march through the summer night to the mess-hall for their annual smoker. Here until midnight speeches of V. M. I. achievements are applauded as heartily by the women as by their husbands. Then follows another traditional ceremony, never omitted. When the last speech has been made, the members of the class celebrating its twentieth anniversary gather about the superintendent and march back to headquarters to enjoy just one hour or more of memories. They cling, these old sons of V. M. I., to the last minute of the day set apart for them. When all are seated about the general's big office table, Old Ben enters, smiling his wide smile and carrying two great pitchers, their silver sides thickly frosted and bunches of fresh mint showing above their wide mouths. Following Old Ben comes Old Ben's boy, a man of twenty-five who will some day take his father's place as the superintendent's head butler; he carries a small regiment of long-stemmed, silver goblets. Bringing up the rear, marches Old Ben's son's son, barefooted and bow-legged, his white teeth gleaming behind the grin that splits his black, shining face. On little Benjamin's tray are piled beaten biscuits, divided in exact halves, with slices of Virginia ham between.

The night that the "Arsenal Class" gathered for its hour,

the general rose before the toast to absent members had been proposed.

“Gentlemen, your institute’s guest of honor this year is the chief of staff of the army; with your consent I should like to have him with us.”

Bolling rose quickly.

“By all means; and I want to break another rule. I move we have Duval in here, too.”

His motion was carried by a shout of approval; but the general shook his head.

“I took the liberty of asking him to join you, urged him to do so, but he refused.” Looking about him, he saw regret. He hesitated a moment longer, then, and the old boys smiled, and he clucked softly: “Ah-h, Bolling and you, Ainslie—I detail you to bring Duval in here dead or alive.” His order raised another shout.

All three left the office. General Tazewell returned with the chief of staff, and a moment later Bolling and Ainslie entered with Duval.

The men greeted their dismissed classmate as if his coming was in no wise unusual. Duval’s lips were tightly closed; before taking his seat he studied each face about the table, and the general knew that had he found one dissenting look he would have left the room. The superintendent, diplomat that he was, steered the talk into easy channels, and before cigars had been well started all outward traces of tension disappeared. Then the general bade Old Ben clear out, and following the negro, made sure that the door was closed. When he returned there was a look of mystery in his face.

“Gentlemen, I’m going to tell you a secret to-night, one known only to Mrs. Tazewell and me. It’s about the arsenal.²² The story of the arsenal, sir”—General Tazewell bowed to the army officer,—“is old to all here except you; but if I don’t talk about it, they will, so I’ll save you from them. Twenty years ago the State owned a double-walled building on that hill over yonder,” and the general waved his hand toward the north. “The roof and outer wall were of stone, the inner

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

wall eighteen inches of hard brick. Inside this solid pile of masonry we had gunpowder stored, four thousand pounds of it. One of these boys"—he smiled at the men about the table—"can probably tell you what kind of job he had to cut through those walls. For the life of me, I've never understood how it was managed. It certainly required heavy labor and good tools; but—and bear in mind that building was inspected daily—those walls were cut through. The man who did it—"

"Don't look so hard at me, General!" Bolling interrupted.²³

"Keep your guilty conscience quiet, sir," the general advised. "The man who did it must have worked for weeks, always at night and between inspections, not more than an hour at a time. He had to remove and hide all débris, and reface the outer wall after each shift. I tell you, sir, any boy who worked half as hard at his studies would graduate first in his class."

"And all this just to make a noise?" his guest asked.

"Exactly. Do you wonder my hair is gray? Look at these scamps about you. See that sparkle in their eyes? There's not one of them that doesn't gloat over the affair to this day.

"Well, it came off one rainy, dark night about a month before finals. The corps had just returned from supper, the boys were enjoying a quiet half-hour before study drum, when a terrific blast shook the earth, a tremendous report that sounded like the bursting of a hundred big guns. A blinding flash lighted up the whole place, every building on the grounds staggered, and a moment after a shower of brick and stone struck the metal roof of the barracks. This with the noise of glass, falling in a torrent of shivered panes, made a din that, I tell you, sir, was simply terrifying."

Bolling, who had listened excitedly, leaped to his feet.

"O you Molly boy! here's to you!" he cried. And in the presence of their superintendent those youngsters of forty or more rose and drank to the unknown hero who had made their class famous. The chief of staff, falling in with their mood,

“MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN”

ested that he and the general join them, and that good
tsman, smiling, held his goblet high.

ere's long life to the scamp!" he called. "And may we
r have another like him!"

ut, General, if this happened immediately after supper,
couldn't you find the cadet who had been absent from
all?" the officer asked.

ou answer that, you rascal," the superintendent said to
ng.

le's at me again!" Bolling assumed an injured tone.
hing I say can hurt my reputation, so here goes. Who-
blew up the arsenal, sir, probably lighted his fuse two or
hours before the spark reached the powder. He was at
er all right with the rest of us; and the man clever enough
t through those walls was smart enough to be talking to
officer, very likely the commandant himself, when that
ous explosion went off."

es, that's clear. But surely. General Tazewell, you had
ions?"

good-natured laugh greeted the question.

very boy in the class was under suspicion at one time or
er."

a, no, General, not so bad as that," Ainslie protested.
e was little Beverly, the librarian, and Duval here, Russel
and one or two others who were not even called before
urt of inquiry."

n interested to know what you did to catch your man,"
ficer persisted.

e were extremely clever about it." The general winked
y at the Arsenal Class. "Long-roll was beaten imme-
y, but the sergeants reported all present or accounted for.
ld the men in ranks, however, while we inspected bar-

Result: one pair of muddy shoes. The next morning
nd strips of burlap wrapped like a turban about the
f Washington's statue, and later discovered tracks lead-
om the arsenal. You know, sir, what a steep bluff there
his side of the Nile. Well, after our Molly crossed that

stream his tracks were worthless as a clue, for he had slipped backward six inches at each step. His foot prints looked as if a giant had made them. 'We'll get him on the flat ground on the other side,' we said, and hurried across the stream to fit the captured shoes into what prints we might find there. No use! We picked up the trail, but the steps were huge, shapeless affairs; the thoughtful gentleman had wrapped both feet in burlap for his enterprise. He used it later, I fancy, for Washington's headdress."

"That boy, General, had a greater genius for making trouble than any regular in the army," the chief of staff declared.

"I suppose that's a compliment, sir; not, however, for our detective powers. But now, gentlemen, for that secret I promised." The general brought a bundle of papers from the safe. "Here's the strangest thing connected with the arsenal affair, and I'll ask you to consider what I say from now on an institute secret." Chairs were drawn closer to the table. "Ten years ago I received this letter." He opened one of the envelopes and read:

Dear General Tazewell: ²⁴

I am sending \$500.00 in cash on account for bill enclosed. I blew up the arsenal. It has taken me all these years to realize that what I once thought a joke was nothing less than a crime against the institute and the State.

As large a remittance as I can afford will be sent each year until the entire amount is paid. Will you kindly keep these letters secret? It will oblige me if you will turn the money over to the treasurer, saying it comes from one who begs you not to reveal his name. I hope to wipe out the obligation in ten years. You may then speak of the matter if you wish.

The name in which this letter is registered is fictitious, but I know if I ask it you will make no effort to discover my identity.

General Tazewell spread the letter on the table, and all saw the crudely drawn skull and bones, the two M's and the figure

“MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN”

14. A swift exchange of meaning glances passed between at least four of the men about the table.

“Why fourteen?” Duval asked, joining for the first time in the general talk. “I thought there never was a fourteenth.”²⁵

“Of course there wasn’t,” Bolling answered. “That fellow must be crazy.”

“Well, gentlemen, here’s the itemized bill.” The general showed a neatly typewritten statement.

Molly McGuire 14.	
to	
The Virginia Military Institute	Dr.
Value of building destroyed.....	\$ 5,000.00
Black powder, 4,000 lbs., @ 12 cts.....	480.00
Glass replaced, 1,800 panes, @ 20 cts.....	360.00
Repairs to roof of barracks.....	250.00
	<hr/>
Net amount	\$ 6,090.00
Compound interest, 10 years, @ 6%.....	4,816.22
	<hr/>
Total	\$10,906.22
Less on account	500.00
	<hr/>
Balance due	\$10,406.22

During the comments following the inspection of the statement, Bolling called out tragically:

“At last I stand vindicated! You know, General, I could never have computed that compound interest.”

“I’m not so sure,” the superintendent said dryly. “Some of you fellows have mighty smart stenographers.”

“But to finish my story. Each year, always on or just before Alumni day, I have had a letter from Molly, Fourteen. They have come from all sorts of places. The first was postmarked San Francisco, there were two from London, one from Dawson City, and so on. The money inclosed, except to-day’s remittance, which, by the way, came from Montreal, has always been in one bill. Once he sent fifty dollars and apologized, saying he had had a bad year of it.” The general paused and

thoughtfully collected the papers. "I'd have sent that back if I'd known where to reach him."

"How does the account stand now, General?"

"The interest has been carefully recomputed each year. The balance this morning was just under one hundred dollars."

The chief of staff rose.

"If you will permit a stranger," he said, and bowed to the men of the Arsenal Class, "here's to Molly McGuire, Fourteen, who, if I'm any judge, is a soldier and a gentleman."

And the toast was drunk standing.²⁶

The next day shortly before the final exercises General Tazewell spoke to his wife.

"Be sure, Evelyn, to start with Mrs. Duval in five minutes. I have given orders to let old Mrs. Duval wait in the quarters of the officer of the day. Join her there, and take the seat reserved for you."

New guests were approaching and Mrs. Tazewell had time only to nod assent. The general went at once to his office.²⁷

"My compliments to Mr. Duval," he said to an orderly, "and ask him to step in here. You will stay outside and see that we are not interrupted."

The superintendent seated himself with a troubled sigh. "I'll have some difficulty with him," he thought. He shook his head doubtfully, but turned smiling to Duval when he entered.

"You sent for me, sir?"

The general caught the strain in Duval's voice; he knew how hard this day was likely to be for his guest.

"Sit down, Duval; we've a few minutes before it's time to go." When the superintendent chose he could put much kindness in his tone. He so chose now as he asked, "You're coming with us to Jackson Hall, aren't you?"

Duval rose and paced the room.

"If you don't mind, I'll let Mrs. Duval go without me." He brought the words out with an effort.

"No, Duval; I want you to go with us."

"But, General, it will be——" Duval stopped and looked

“MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN”

adily at the superintendent. “There is something behind this.”

Yes, there is; but what it is, you must leave to me,” the general said earnestly.

You make it hard to refuse you.” Duval’s voice was less kind; for a moment the superintendent thought his point was gained. But suddenly his guest’s hands clinched. “No General, I cannot do what you ask!”

Come come, man! It was twenty years ago.”

Yes, twenty years! Twenty years of regret,” Duval said earnestly. “Twenty years of remembering the look on my mother’s face when her son walked from that hall *disgraced*.”

My boy, this is morbid. Once more I ask you to come with me.

I’ve saved a seat on the rostrum for you.” The general’s voice was still kind.

Duval took a quick step toward him.

And face that crowd when half of them know that I, a dismissed cadet, have no right even to enter the building? No!” Duval’s voice shook. “No, I will not do it!”

The superintendent rose, his shoulders straight, heels together. “Steady, Duval!”

It was the ringing command that so many cadets had heard and obeyed. “You’ll accompany me, sir, for the final exercises to-day!”

Then for both these men life turned swiftly back; in the action of a second twenty years of time lay flattened on the heels of its recoil. Duval’s body jerked erect, the hand swung forward in prompt salute.

Ready, sir!” he answered firmly, though his face had lost its color.

Come then, boy!” The general took his arm, and together they headed the group of special guests that filed across the parade-ground.

Final exercises²⁸ are attended by as many people as can possibly crowd into the Gothic hall dedicated to the memory of General Andrew Jackson. The enthusiastic audience and the room, crowded with pictured records of V. M. I. history, make an in-

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

teresting sight. Between the high leaded windows are paintings of former institute officers: Colonel Claud Crozet, president of the first board of visitors and before that an officer under Napoleon; Preston, famous for his gallantry in the Mexican War; Brook, designer and builder of the *Merrimac*, and a score of others in Confederate uniforms. In the place of honor hangs a fine portrait of Jackson, the one showing the misplaced button carelessly pinned to his coat after he had given the original to that little girl in Winchester who cried for it when the great soldier rode one day through the town.

From the flower-covered rostrum, stretching to the rear wall, the cadets sit twenty abreast, clear-eyed athletes, trained to the last ounce after their year of drills and sports. All are eager, expectant, for each will hear for the first time to-day his standing in his class. In the front rows are grouped the first classmen who soon must leave this place that for four years has been home to them. One look into these faces tells better than can a thousand written words their love for the old school. The eagerness in their eyes is veiled by sadness; there is sadness in the way they search uneasily about the familiar room, or turn to one and another, forcing smiles to keep up their drooping spirits.

The side seats are set apart for the mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, of these boys. Southern families are large, but all must be here to see "brother" graduate. The balcony filled by summer-clad girls curves a great horseshoe above the main floor; here and there the gold-braided uniform of some young officer adds a still brighter tone to this circling bank of color.

Mrs. Tazewell once said of this gathering: "Those gray-coated boys at attention in the center, surrounded by the many-colored, moving fans, always remind me of a still, blue-gray field with hundreds of butterflies fluttering about its edges."

When the general and his guests reached the platform ne turned to Duval.

“MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN”

“Well, boy, we’re mighty glad to have you here again.” He felt Duval’s arm trembling in his.

“If I only had the right, I should be proud to be here,” he answered earnestly. Then indicating a far corner: “May I take that seat?”

“Anywhere you like,” the general answered casually; but he was pleased that Duval had chosen the seat reserved for him. A palm concealed the greater part of the audience from his view.

There are features in the ceremonies that followed unknown to other colleges, and two that for a visitor from above the Mason and Dixon Line are altogether extraordinary. The first is the valedictory address, or, rather, what happens immediately after; for here as elsewhere the student orator thunders platitudes as if proclaiming hitherto unknown truths. But to these boys who have lived for long under the same roof his words are less impersonal; the class listen tensely to reminiscences of their struggles and friendships. When the speaker leaves the platform, usually overcome by the scenes he has sketched and which they all know can never live again, his classmates, crowding about him, grip his hand; handkerchiefs come suddenly into view, and are pressed to eyes that are not ashamed. And the visitor, looking on, be he never so world-hardened, does not smile.

The graduation address, which that day was a call to the patriotism of these boys made by the chief of staff, is followed by the conferring of degrees. As each name is called a cadet steps forward to receive his diploma, signed and sealed by Virginia’s governor. Applause sounds through the room; friends cry out his name above the cheers of classmates. Then the cadet turns and searches for the one who is waiting to share his victory, usually some mother who watches proudly her boy’s approach. And when he has placed his degree in her outstretched hand, that man, be he twenty or twenty-seven, lowers his head, his arm closes about the mother’s shoulder, and as though the world held only themselves, he kisses her happy, tearful face. It all comes so naturally, so simply, this

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

tribute to parents from these manly boys, that no one wonders, no one smiles.

And so it goes, name after name, on down through the class, applause following each cadet who answers. Then at last the general pauses, and though he has gone through this for many years, humor kindles anew in his eyes when he calls the cadet who has graduated last in his class. At this name all the applause that has gone before is as a summer breeze to the storm of hand-clapping, the cries and cheers that burst from class and friends. For this boy, the last one helped over the fence, has received the "Bull Dip." He marches to the platform as proudly as did the first-stand man; and who shall say that his mother is not happy when her boy's diploma, snatched from the teeth of defeat, is safe at last in her keeping?

When the degrees have been given there are only a few minutes left, and that day ²⁹ the audience began to stir, making ready to leave after the army appointments as lieutenants had been announced. But the superintendent held up his hand.

"There is one thing more. Before the battalion forms for the last time this year I have another duty to fulfill." His eyes swept the crowd. He saw his wife reach out and take Mrs. Duval's hand. Next to Mrs. Duval a white-haired woman ³⁰ was sitting straight in her chair, her lips pressed hard together. "To-day," the general continued, "the institute will do something for which there is no precedent in her history." The room became suddenly still; not one fan in that crowded audience was moving. "Twenty years ago a cadet whose record until the final day of his four years had been without a flaw forgot himself." He glanced toward the far corner of the rostrum, and saw a face flushed from chin to forehead. Duval had turned toward the speaker; both hands gripped one arm of the chair. "Forgot himself so far," the superintendent went on in even voice, "that he very nearly broke up the final exercises of that year."

The general turned squarely to Duval with his kind smile.

"I'm afraid we're a bit old-fogy down here at times, for it

has taken us all these years to catch the humor of that joke. But, my friends, it was a good joke,”—he faced the audience, which was now smiling with him,—“too good! It caused the dismissal of one of the best students this institute ever matriculated.”

The set lips of the white-haired woman parted; she covered her eyes with one trembling hand.

The general raised his voice.

“And now that time has robbed that joke of its sting, the institute wishes to give that man all the honors the boy had won and would have received.”

Far back in the hall where the men of twenty years ago were gathered a cheer burst from some strong throat, and instantly the tension that held the crowd broke. Wave after wave of applause rang through the big room. The general, signaling for silence, turned to the man hidden behind the palm.

“Mr. Duval, step to the front, sir.”

The great audience rose. Again there was applause, every pair of hands in the room beating furiously together. For a moment Duval did not move; then with an effort he rose and walked unsteadily to the front.

“Mr. Duval,”—the general’s voice filled the room,—“your institute now confers upon you the degree which for so long has been withheld. You will find the number (four) written in its proper place, and as fourth graduate of your class your name will appear hereafter in the register.”

He thrust the diploma into Duval’s hand, who stood before him white, shaken, his trembling fingers hardly able to hold this mark of his reinstatement. Again the crowd broke into applause, and the general, throwing his arm about the dazed man’s shoulders, shouted above the noise:

“It’s all right, boy! It’s all right at last!” ³¹

When the applause died down he asked Duval if he cared to make some reply; but his old pupil stood still dazed, looking aimlessly over the crowd. Suddenly he started in surprise; a smile parted his set lips. He had seen two upturned faces that were smiling back at him through happy, tear-

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

dimmed eyes. Instantly all hesitation dropped from the man's bearing. Duval left the rostrum, his eyes fixed upon those faces, and walked up the crowded aisle. Before the two women he stopped and put the degree into his mother's old hands; then he bent low and gave this mother the kiss he had lost for her twenty years before.

The crowd was silent while he walked back to his place; no one moved from his seat. But a stir went through the gray field in the center of the room. Every eye in the cadet ranks had followed their older brother; they knew him now for such, for he had carried out to the last act the last tradition of the corps. When Duval reached the platform the first captain of those boys sprang to his feet.

"Together, nine for Duval!" he shouted.

Instantly a mighty cheer roared out, rising and falling in unison as they gave the call: "Rah! Rah! Rah!"

Nine times the cry rang from six hundred young throats, followed by the crashing ending: "V. M. I. Duval! Duval! V. M. I."

While the visitors were applauding this demonstration the general watched the two women holding tightly that age-tinted parchment. He clucked softly and breathed a long-drawn "Ah-h." There are moments, he thought, moments in this life.

At his order the cadets marched from the room, company after company, and after them the guests filed out. For the better part of two hours the general had been standing; he sat down now with a sigh of relief. From his chair he would be able to see the formation out on the parade-ground, and the music of "Auld Lang Syne" would float in to him through the open windows; so he asked to be left alone. The last to go, coming from his corner behind the palm, was Duval. He stopped at the superintendent's chair.

"There is nothing—nothing I can say, General; not just now." He was dangerously near breaking down. "Perhaps—perhaps later——"

"There is nothing you need say, boy, now or later." The

“MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN”

general held out his hand. Duval caught it in both his own, gave the general a hard grip, and walked quickly from the room.

For a long time the superintendent sat motionless, smiling. Outside the band had played “Auld Lang Syne” half-way through before he lifted the hand Duval had pressed.³² A crisp yellow bill, released by his opening fingers, rolled open. It was wrapped about a leaf torn from a notebook, and on this paper, scribbled in pencil, the general saw: “When not even suspected in the arsenal affair, I became desperate. Paid in full.”



FREDERICK STUART GREENE

"I am a Virginian," says Captain Greene, "who was born too long ago for comfort—1870."

"From that time until 1886 I went through the hair-breadth escapes other boys enjoyed in those good un-nurse-attended days. The list includes breaking through ice into thirty feet of water, falling under a moving train, being peppered with bird-shot by the usual unloaded gun, diving and being caught under a log-raft on the Ohio River, and similar adventures."

At the age of sixteen, Mr. Greene entered the Virginia Military Institute, where he was graduated in 1890 at the foot of his class. When he left his alma mater he determined never again to wear uniform, but the story here republished shows that V. M. I. men are ready if need arises. His training was better than he knew. Having specialized in civil engineering, he followed successfully this pursuit until May 14, 1917. Meantime, at the age of forty-four, he was moved to give an account of a venture in real life, the building of a home on Long Island. "Stictuit" appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, the editor having paid two hundred dollars for it. "The literary vaccine took so violently," says the author, "that it has cost me through neglect of legitimate business, some twenty thousand dollars." In any event, Mr. Greene gave two years of hard work to learning the art of constructing short-stories and succeeded in creating a demand from editors of foremost publications. *The Century*, *The Metropolitan*, and *McClure's* are among the periodicals which have bought his narratives. "The Cat of the Cane-Brake" (*Metropolitan*, August, 1916) was ranked by Edward J. O'Brien as a leader in over two thousand stories appearing in that year, and was reprinted in Mr. O'Brien's "Best Short Stories of 1916." The present story is from *The Century*, September, 1917.

FREDERICK STUART GREENE

In advancing professionally, Mr. Greene early found his way to New York, where he was married, in 1900, to Miss Grace Clapp, of New England. For more than seventeen years, the author states, his life has been full of happiness, which is seventeen years more of contentment than many people ever know. When a state of war was declared in 1917, he secured his Captain's commission. Since that time he has been either in training or training others, and is now on active service "Somewhere in France."

Other stories having a school or college atmosphere or setting:

"Fixing That Freshman," by Jesse Lynch Williams (In "Princeton Stories").

"First Aid to Kitty James," by Elizabeth Jordan (In "May Iverson—Her Book").

"I Introduce Motion Study," by Elizabeth Jordan (In "May Iverson Tackles Life").

"A Christmas Present For a Lady," by Myra Kelly (In "Little Citizens").

"The Flag of Their Country," by Rudyard Kipling (In "Stalky and Company").

"Emmy Lou," by George Madden Martin.

"The Madness of Philip," by Josephine D. Bacon (In "The Madness of Philip").

"Evils of Drink," "School," "Soaring," "Uncle John," and "Fidelity of a Little Dog" (Being Chapters VII to XI of "Penrod"), by Booth Tarkington.

"An Academic Question," by Dorothy Canfield Fisher (In "The Real Motive").

"Philosophy Four," by Owen Wister.

Other stories by Captain Greene:

"Galway Intrudes" (In *The Century*, June, 1915).

"The Cat of the Cane-Brake" (In Edward J. O'Brien's "Best

A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Short Stories for 1916"; reprinted from *The Metropolitan*, August, 1916).

"A Ticket to North Carolina" (In *The Century*, January, 1916).

"The Bunker Mouse" (In Mr. O'Brien's "Best Short Stories for 1917," reprinted from *The Century*, March, 1917).

NOTES

LEGEND OF THE MOON'S LEGACY

1. **Alhambra.** The ruined palace of the Moors, Granada, Spain.

2. **and which.** This construction was regarded as correct in the time of Irving. Notice the same use by Sir Walter Scott.

3. **the Moors.** The race which held dominion in Granada up to the time of the conquest. "A remote wave of the great Arabian inundation," they conquered a stretch of country from Gibraltar to the Pyrenees. Checked at Tours, they sought to establish in Spain a permanent dominion. For nearly eight centuries they were a distinct people, but routed by the Goths, the nation disintegrated and now only the name is left. Boabdil was the last of the Moorish rulers.

4. **wells.** Read the story of Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis, xxiv). Do you recall other Scriptural stories centering about a well?

5. These first two paragraphs form the introduction of the legend. The following paragraph presents the chief character.

6. **Gallicia.** An ancient kingdom in Northwest Spain. It is now divided into the provinces of Coruna, Lugo, Orense, and Pontevedra.

7. **Savoyard.** A native of Savoy, a former duchy of the kingdom south of Lake Geneva.

8. **pannier.** A wicker basket.

9. **maravedies.** Spanish coins of former days. A maravedi was worth about two-fifths of a cent.

10. **Vega.** A vega is an orchard or fruitful plain. With the close of this paragraph the general presentation of character is completed. The following paragraph marks the time the *story* begins.

NOTES

11. **puchero.** A plant; it is probably used here, by synecdoche, for meal.

12. **When arrived.** The initial impulse of the action is now presented. The first incident follows.

13. **Inquisition.** A court for examination of heretics. The Spanish Inquisition began with Ferdinand and Isabella, in 1478, and was abolished in 1820. Read Irving's "The Student of Salamanca," and Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum."

14. **being, etc.** Notice the loose participial construction. Present day style demands "that," or some other word, with which "being" is in immediate agreement.

15. **alguazil.** A constable.

16. **As ill-luck would have it, etc.** Here the force antagonistic to Peregil is introduced. Observe that the chief struggle (that between Peregil and his opponents) sets in. A divergence between the legend and the short story is here manifest. Irving leaves Pedro, who has set out for the banks of the river, and turns to the barber. The present day writer would remain with Pedro, would have Pedro notice, perhaps, the closing of the barber's shutter, or would have him meet the barber, would have him in some significant manner receive an impression of the barber's watchfulness and suspicion. Then the reader would learn, later, with Pedro what steps the barber had taken. This information would probably be given at the time Pedro is brought before the Alcalde. The legend cares little for surprise, or even adherence to a definite point of view. The short story has due regard for both.

17. **Barber of Seville.** The title character in the opera by Rossini. It was first produced in 1816.

18. **quidnuncs.** Busybodies, gossips.

19. **Alcalde.** A magistrate corresponding to a justice of the peace.

20. The bringing of Pedro Gil before the Alcalde begins a minor climax scene. The scene ends with the discharge

of Pedro and his temporary reverse of fortune in the loss of his donkey.

21. **Behold the unfortunate**, etc. The hardship of Pedro's existence is emphasized, in order to bring out, by contrast, the happiness of his future estate.

22. **At length**, etc. A new incident. Pedro's fortunes begin to rise, again.

23. **That evening**, etc. The element of luck again enters. Legend freely allows instances of luck or chance, whereas the modern story permits them only when they are made to appear inevitable. Here, the story writer would motivate the turning of the conversation upon riches.

24. **In the morning**, etc. The modern story would accelerate the element of time. The legend is deliberate, slow.

25. **woe to him**, etc. A clue to the later developments. This sentence makes credible the entombment of the three worthies.

26. **midnight**. The traditional hour for supernatural effects.

27. **myrrh, frankincense, and storax**. Oriental gums or resins, having aromatic fragrance.

28. **The Moor began to read**, etc. This passage marks the beginning of the climax scene. The turning of Pedro's fortune is at hand.

29. The warning of the Moor is a clue to the temporary reverse of fortune.

30. Observe the motivation for Pedro's telling the story to his wife.

31. **and slipped them into her bosom**. The temporary reverse begins here, though it is not perceptible until later.

32. **watchful eye**. Pedrillo's character is well maintained. After his first discovery, we should expect something of the sort from him again.

33. The advice of the alguazil and its acceptance by the Alcalde furnishes reason for the poetic justice of the outcome. The reader feels that they got what they deserved.

34. The repetition of the visit, the scene, the securing of

treasure add to the credibility of the enchantment. The throwing away of the taper seems to clinch the fact that the three worthies will not be released soon.

35. The burial of the Alcalde, the alguazil, and the barber means the utter destruction of the opposing force. Pedro's fortune is now safe.

36. The climax of action. The remainder of the story forms the conclusion, rounding out the narrative.

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

1. **Rome.** The definite indication of setting helps to prepare the reader for the acceptance of the plot.

2. **At length.** Notice the effect of the italics here and elsewhere in the narrative.

3. This paragraph has hardly an unnecessary word by way of forecast and general explanation. The first sentence indicates that Montresor has cause to be revenged. Looking at the story with regard to the struggle, we should say that the beginning represents the dramatic climax in a long series: Fortunato has had the upper hand through "a thousand injuries"; now, Montresor vows revenge. If all the events of the series were included, the present recounter would represent the "downward action." But Poe presents his material after the manner of the Greek tragedies: he gives the motive for the deed of revenge, and expends all his force in exploiting, as it were, the last act of the large drama, the entire struggle. Moreover, the two conditions rehearsed are direct pointers to the death of Fortunato, a death preceded by his full recognition of Montresor's vengeance.

4. **immolation.** Observe in this word the repetition of forecast.

5. **the carnival season.** Poe was quick to perceive the advantage of rhetorical aids. Here he sounds the note of contrast, which is at the same time, a harmonious note.

6. **cap and bells.** The dress of the court fool, here

NOTES

chosen for the double significance: Fortunato was not only a mock fool; he behaved like a real one.

7. "**How remarkably well,**" etc. In the "egging on" of Fortunato, the first device is that of open flattery. This statement is followed by implicit flattery: "I have my doubts," becoming explicit a few lines further on, "I was silly enough," etc.

8. "**I am on my way,**" etc. The second device in the cajolement is that of pretended disinterest in favor of another connoisseur.

9. "**Come,**" etc. Fortunato's pride in his own connoisseurship brooks no competition.

10. "**My friend, no.**" The third step in the urging is a simulated purpose not to interfere with Fortunato's engagements; this step is repeated, more effectively, with the apparent desire not to cause Fortunato suffering.

11. **mask of black silk**, etc. The carnival also offers Montresor a chance to disguise himself. The *black* note is in harmony with the tragic nature of the story.

12. **flambeaus**. Torches. Properties adding to the mediæval character of the setting.

13. **catacombs**. They have now arrived in the very abode of death. Gloomy forecast intensified.

14. **white web-work**. Significant of age. Suggestive of the fact that these passages are rarely used.

15. "**happy, as once I was.**" This speech suggests, further, that Fortunato may have had to do with present unhappiness.

16. "**True, true,**" I replied. Dramatic irony. Montresor's words convey to Fortunato something different from what Montresor has in mind.

17. "**long Life.**" Irony, again.

18. "**vaults—extensive.**" A natural remark, serving the further purpose of indicating to the reader how far from the outer world the two had progressed.

19. **arms**. Coat of arms.

NOTES

20. **d'or**, etc. Heraldic terms: d'or, of gold; azure, sky-blue; rampant, leaping or rearing.

21. "**Nemo me**," etc. No one attacks me with impunity. The arms and the motto emphasize by suggestion the relation existing between Montresor and Fortunato.

22. "**ere it is too late**." Montresor, ironically, offers Fortunato a chance to escape.

23. **flagon of De Grave**. Emphasis on Fortunato's increasing intoxication.

24. **a trowel**. Fortunato has given a Masonic sign. Montresor, not understanding, none the less declares himself a mason. He has of course, another meaning: he is a mason who uses brick and mortar. Fortunato's "recoil" is perhaps explainable on the ground of his having seen burial services wherein the trowel played a part.

25. Fortunato's leaning heavily upon Montresor's arm is a fitting forecast of the feebleness in the niche.

26. This paragraph describes minutely the end of the journey, although the reader does not at first grasp the fact. By withholding the *purpose* of the recess, Poe lures the reader to full comprehension of the picture. Then he continues with the action.

27. **did not enable us to see**. Poe has prepared for this gloom earlier in the line,—"*the foulness of the air caused our flambeaus rather to glow than flame*——"

28. The chain and padlock tell the reader that Montresor had made ready the niche. The building stone and mortar, some lines further along, emphasize the fact.

29. **intoxication—worn off**. Montresor's intention that Fortunato *should know* of the revenge begins to find fulfillment.

30. Notice, in this paragraph, the dramatic effect produced by the sounds. Montresor, at first concerned lest some one hear his enemy's screams, is assured on reflection, that the catacomb walls are proof against them. His replies tell Fortunato more loudly and surely than words that help from without is a baseless hope.

NOTES

31. **"The Amontillado."** By taking up Fortunato's words, "over our wine," Montresor seems to say, "Yes, we shall laugh about it over the Amontillado." But, again, he speaks ironically. He means to taunt Fortunato with the truth that his journey to the pipe of Amontillado has led to this end,—that it was for this end he had been lured into the vaults.

32. **"For the love of God, Montresor!"** Fortunato, now fully recovered from his intoxication, descends finally to leading.

33. Montresor's repetition of the phrase means much. "It is for the love of God," he seems to say, "that I am bidding the world of you."

34. —on account of the dampness of the catacombs. Montresor's reason is only alleged. He cannot but experience a revulsion of feeling at having taken the life of one who had been his friend.

35. **rampart of bones.** Montresor having effected his vengeance takes pains to prevent being found out. The half century that has passed without anyone's disturbing the bones strengthens the security Montresor felt.

36. **In pace requiescat.** Let him rest in peace.

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

1. **Sandy Bar.** According to Bret Harte's map of California, Sandy Bar is South of Poker Flat in Sierra County.

2. The "christenings" suggested in the first paragraph are from real life or have their counterparts in fact. Flour sacks, for example, still bearing the brand frequently become part of a man's trousers. Hence, "Eagle Mills" followed as a nick-name. And see the description of the partner—cf. note 14.

3. Notice the characterization of the partner's wife in the rapid summary of the two main episodes wherein she appears, and the hint of the third episode.

4. **Marysville.** West of Sandy Bar, in Yuba County.

5. —to shake his hand, etc. Notice the combination of

humor and pathos. How is it effected? What is the result for the reader?

6. **He was known to be a gambler.** In making the partner his hero, Bret Harte did a difficult thing. Tennessee stands out in bold, strong lines; yet against his figure the partner's is adequately relieved, in favor of the latter. Notice the order of their introduction to the reader, with emphasis on the partner.

7. The episode here recorded represents the humor of reality; it is typical of the pioneer community and characters. Its purpose in the narrative is to convince the reader that Tennessee has shown himself a highwayman, and so to bring the reader into accord with the community feeling.

8. The episode of the capture is the climax in a career marked by gambling, theft, robbery, and disloyalty. By what treatment has Bret Harte made these characteristics patent?

9. **It was a warm night.** By the double spacing, or mechanical break, which precedes this statement and by the definite indication of time, as opposed to the preceding generalizations, the author indicates the beginning of the action of the central incident.

10. **chaparral.** A tangle of dwarf oak, and thorny shrub or cactus.

11. **the old loft above the express office.** A rude setting for an extempore court of justice. Probably the author had in mind the office of his express-agent days.

12. **human weakness.** Notice, again, the humor of the incongruous.

13. The entrance of the partner marks a rise of interest. Here the struggle to save Tennessee's life begins.

14. Covering for flour? See note 2.

15. **great gravity.** A repetition of the idea in paragraph 3, as to the partner's "lack of humorous appreciation."

16. This, the first speech of the partner, is in harmony with what has been said of him. He is a simple, diffident man, unconsciously humorous by virtue of the incongruity

PROPERTY OF
DAVID
HARRIS

NOTES

between his seriousness of bearing and purpose on the one hand and his homely, even comic, exterior on the other.

17. His unwitting bribe of seventeen hundred dollars marks the dramatic climax of the story. This is the high point with respect to the partner's affection for Tennessee in that he gave all his worldly goods to redeem his life; it is the high point in respect to the partner himself, since "for a moment his life was in jeopardy"; it is the tense moment with respect to the "drama" or the struggle. What will be the outcome?

18. **Tennessee laughed.** This act is in harmony with Tennessee's devil-may-care insolence. At the same time, it indicates his appreciation of humor.

19. **his rough hand trembled slightly on the table.** This slight revelation of the partner's feelings finds a reaction in the mind of the reader, whose sympathies are turned definitely toward him, and whose intellect says, "Perhaps Tennessee wasn't all bad, since his partner cared so much about him."

20. Note the continued dialect of the card table.

21. **white teeth.** The hint of cleanliness, oddly enough, makes Tennessee an appealing, even a romantic figure to the reader.

22. The close of the dramatic climax scene.

23. **Red Dog.** In Nevada County, south of Sandy Bar.

24. The hanging episode is left to the reader's imagination. By summarizing, the author avoids emphasis on the brutal rather than on the pathetic, and also prepares the way for emphasis on the partner.

25. Combination of humor and pathos represented in what details in this paragraph?

26. **catfalque.** A stage or platform for bearing a corpse or an effigy.

27. Notice, in this paragraph, the effect of dignified grief upon the frivolously inclined company.

28. —**clothed in funeral drapery, etc.** A good example

NOTES

of harmonizing details to enhance the main impression. That is, night was falling.

29. This is a fitting place for revealing the activities of the partner after his failure to save Tennessee's life.

30. This simple "funeral speech," though it reveals the influence of Dickens, stands out pre-eminently as the oration of Bret Harte's "partner." His dignity, his diffidence, his unconscious poetry and his faithfulness to Tennessee dead or alive,—all are ear-marks of his personality.

31. After the serious and tragic picture, the author adds a touch of humor by repeated comment on the comparative redness of the partner's face and his handkerchief.

32. —took to his bed. The obvious effect of Tennessee's death; a further proof of affection.

33. **And so they met.** The dénouement. It has sometimes been said by way of criticism that this final episode is "tacked on." But the author doubtless felt it necessary to round out the narrative. It is asserted that he worked to avoid abrupt terminations, which came more easily to him.

"Tennessee's Partner" will serve to illustrate the way in which an artist converts fact into fiction. Chaffee and Chamberlain were two settlers who lived together, shared their fortunes, and stood loyally by each other. On one occasion when Chamberlain had been arraigned for some grave offense, Chaffee appeared in court and made an eloquent plea which saved his friend's life. This incident, still the chief one of the story, has been heightened by the episodes already noted.

THE LAST LESSON

1. The speech of the blacksmith is a forecast of the "last lesson."

2. —everything was quiet. Notice the contrast by which the silence is intensified: "Usually" vs. "on this day."

NOTES

3. **But nothing happened.** A further suggestion of the difference between this and other days.

4. The Sunday dress of the master also enhances the unusualness of the occasion.

5. The solemn company is a climax in the well-described scene, with its boding atmosphere. The action of the "single incident," which the French writers handle so well, now begins.

6. Regret is the prime emotion induced in the narrator by his reflections.

7. Although the people of Alsace, outside the larger towns, spoke German among themselves, yet they were French in spirit. Daudet's speech of the master, therefore, is true to the setting.

8. —**the most beautiful language, etc.** Daudet's own belief about French. Notice, also, the quotation from his friend Mistral.

9. **Once some beetles, etc.** Again, the contrast.

10. **For forty years, etc.** Observe the telling brevity with which the author suggests the effect and happenings of forty years.

11. —**Angelus . . . trumpets of the Prussians, etc.** The effect of the sounds is like that of a command. The silence breaks up; the silent application and tension are at an end; suspense, well managed, is over.

12. **M. Hamel rose, etc.** The climax of the scene is written with admirable restraint and dramatic effect.

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

1. **It was not a very wise proceeding.** A clue to mishap on Denis's part.

2. **Burgundy and England.** These names indicate the time of the story, more definitely stated in the following paragraph.

3. —**the weather had fallen sharp.** After the introduction of his chief character, the author gives the time, in-

dicates the state of the weather, and hints at the nature of the place. In how many stories so far studied have these methods been used? What do you deduce?

4. —**long past midnight.** Note the time; see how it helps to account for Denis's being lost.

5. —**the windows of the chapel gleamed.** When the chapel is next mentioned, try to determine what this first allusion does by way of verisimilitude.

6. —**house of his own.** Suggesting the young man's worldly estate.

7. —**two families.** Observe how the author brings them together.

8. —**chapter of accidents.** Accident at the foundation of a story is always acceptable. The reader recognizes that but for the accident or coincidence the events would not have followed. But coincidence or accident used in the body of the story must be made, by skilful structure, to seem natural.

9. —**memorable above all things.** Another forecast of unusual occurrences.

10. —**his foot rolled upon a pebble.** A slight and natural accident. Upon it, observe, depends the train of immediate events and those following.

11. —**it yielded.** First cause of new suspense. Why did the door yield? See how the author unfolds the business.

12. **What ailed the door?** The questions Denis asks himself are the very ones troubling the reader.

13. —**rapidly scaled the stairs.** The passage up the stairway marks the transition between the two scenes.

14. —**apartment of polished stone.** The setting for the scene which follows.

15. —**a little old gentleman.** The second chief character is presented. The picture is often cited as a perfect specimen of descriptive art. Try to determine whether the acts of the little old gentleman are such as you would expect from the pen-picture.

NOTES

—**“I have been expecting you.”** What is the reader’s at here? Has a mistake been made?

—**from behind the arras.** The right moment for suggesting some other person or power, perhaps having to do with his strange adventure.

—**nephew.** A clue to the situation.

—**what absurd or tragical adventure.** The cause of the case has gradually changed. Having seen Denis escape the first pit, we now know that he has fallen into another pit. We do not yet know its nature. **“What is it?”** concludes.

“She is in a better frame of spirit.” Obviously, then, the man has some part in this play.

—**towards the chapel-door.** Another transition: the next scene follows.

—**young girl richly attired, etc.** The third character. The situation begins to clear up.

“That is not the man!” The situation is now almost completely disclosed.

“I expected as much.” Since she has not “remembered” the name of the young man, her consternation is suggested by her uncle not to be genuine. See the consequences of the falsehood!

—**“before we proceed,” etc.** Now the question before us: What will happen to Denis as regards the ceremony—will he escape?

“I have tried to find your own gallant.” The business is unfolded: the trap was set to catch the “gallant.”

—**with that he went out, etc.** The scene is terminated. A new scene follows, the first between Blanche and

Her question is logical: she knows nothing of how the case came to be on hand.

—**“to know my story.”** Blanche now narrates the history of the past circumstances to satisfy, completely, both the man and the reader.

Are the discoveries made by the sire and his manner

of making it in harmony with what we have seen and heard of him?

31. —**the pair passed out.** The scene has closed. Its purpose is to make matters lucid for each young person and for the reader. But suspense still works: what will happen next?

32. —**positively sickening.** Denis understands that his words have made no impression on the decision of the old man.

33. —**a very efficacious rope.** The symbol of death gives the reader a thrill, as in a much greater degree it must have astounded Denis.

34. —**“nor my own private feelings.”** The heart of the sire’s character. Family honor, with him, stands before all or individual preferences.

35. —**passage full of armed men.** One of the best touches in the story. Denis would appear to be a craven if he did not offer to fight; but the sire is too old. His death would be to Denis’s discredit. The sire, however, has taken necessary precautions to insure his own safety, and Denis is no match for such odds.

36. —**followed by the chaplain with a hand-lamp.** The final scene follows this transition.

37. —**“I may be too proud to accept.”** A new cause for misunderstanding, and for suspense.

38. —**death was on the march.** This race with time keeps the reader in suspense.

39. —**peal of cockcrow.** The effect of sudden sound on tense silence has been utilized many times in literature. Macbeth, with the knocking at the gate, is the classical instance. The tapping of the blind man’s cane in “Treasure Island,” and the knocking of the jovial gentleman in “Markheim” are other examples in the stories of Stevenson.

40. —**fell to weeping again.** Is the cause of her weeping the same as before?

41. —**“my part against my uncle.”** Therein lay the cause of Blanche’s inclination to Denis. Is it logical?

NOTES

42. "Here is the dawn." Is there any doubt, yet, of the outcome?

43. —"better than the whole world." Are you convinced that the young man was serious? Or did the thought of death make Blanche seem the more desirable?

44. As he stopped speaking. A neat transition to the last part of the scene.

45. —his new nephew. By implication, then, the happy ending is fixed. Is this end "inevitable" from the beginning?

This is one of the best classic examples of a "unity" story: the time covers only a few hours—between midnight and daybreak; the place is constant, nor does any essential part of the action occur elsewhere than in the house itself. The street scene is introductory and affords opportunity for contrast; it also leads directly to the action of the real story.

The story is told from Denis's point of view or angle of narration. It is Denis whom the reader follows from beginning to end. Suggest what the story would be if it were told from Blanche's point of view.

THE NECKLACE

1. In the first paragraph the author gives summarily the antecedent history of his chief character.

2. The second paragraph, which generalizes, strikes a truth important to this story. It suggests, logically, that the character introduced might have been—as later set forth—the belle of the ball.

3. —the ugly furnishings. Count the words De Mauassant employs to convey a clear idea of her poverty. Further, notice in the following sentences, which suggest her fancies, how he uses contrast,—“silent antechambers, draped with Oriental hangings,” etc.

4. When she sat down for dinner . . . A generalized

NOTES

incident, following which is more of her dreaming, by way of contrast.

5. —**rich friend.** Skilful introduction of the second important character.

6. In something over four hundred words, we have all the information necessary to appreciation of the narrative.

7. —**one day.** Suggesting, as does the “once-upon-a-time” of fairy tales, the definite beginning of the story.

8. The end of the initial incident.

9. **One evening.** The second incident begins. It is separated from the first by the use of the double space to indicate transition and is joined to it by the words, “The day of the ball drew near,” etc.

10. “**Find your friend,**” etc. With fitting art, the author makes the husband the one to propose the borrowing of the jewels. The punishment, then, falls with justice on him also.

11. **The next morning.** The third incident or episode or scene is introduced by these words.

12. —**the mirror door.** A phrase indicating at once the comparative splendor of Madame Forestier’s home.

13. —**fled with her treasure.** The close of the third incident, or of the minor crisis.

14. Only two brief paragraphs are devoted to the ball and Madame Loisel’s triumph. Why is the picture of the ball-room not given in detail? What effect would such a picture have on the unity of the story?

15. —**whose wives were enjoying themselves.** Conscious cynicism and satire on women who think only of pleasure.

16. Excellent note of realism. There had not been enough money for wraps, too.

17. “**I’ll call a cab.**” This speech emphasizes that they had no conveyance of their own, and also in connection with the fact that she “did not listen to him” leads directly to the search for a cab. Afterward, the reader recalls that there was a chance for losing, hopelessly, the necklace in the walk toward the Seine.

18. —wretched appearance. Suggesting, again, a probable connection with the loss.
19. A transitional paragraph, connecting the finding of the cab with the incident of the dramatic climax.
20. **She took off her wraps.** The climax of the story is her discovery of the loss.
21. A paragraph which describes accurately the first frenzied search for an article of value.
22. With Loisel's words, the climax scene ends. Henceforth, the story recounts the search for the necklace and the labor to replace it.
23. —“**having it repaired.**” If they had told the truth at once, they would have been spared many years of misery. Again, notice, it is the husband who proposes the falsehood.
24. **The next morning.** Here is only a suggested scene. But the speech of the jeweler is significant. A box supposedly containing real gems contained in reality something of less value. What if the jeweler had supplied both?
25. The plan for replacement is briefly presented.
26. —as her friend had greatly feared. Excellent scene. Madame Forestier's coldness is natural. If she had opened the box at once, perhaps the facts might have followed, logically.
27. —in an attic. Mediocre and commonplace as Madame Loisel's former life had been, it was comfortable compared with the sordid existence to which she was now reduced.
28. **And this life lasted ten years.** Consider its effect on the outer and inner personality.
29. **How small a thing.** If the story has a subjective theme or lesson, perhaps this is it.
30. —one Sunday. Indicative, as usual, of a direct scene. Observe with what dramatic terseness the final episode is presented.
31. —still engaging. Contrast effectively employed.
32. “**You brought it back to me.**” As a matter of fact, it is hardly probable that Madame Forestier would have failed to detect a substitution of real stones for false ones.

But this weak point in the narrative is obliterated as the reader receives the shock of the final sentence.

33. The final speech of Madame Forestier definitely closes the story, and the author was artist enough not to spoil it by an explanation. As has been said by other critics Madame Forestier restored the money, and so the latter days of Madame Loisel must have had some compensation for her heroic efforts. But the lost years!

The student who is interested in surprise endings should notice that, technically, the surprise is secured by two methods. First, the story is told with the spotlight on Madame Loisel. What she does, the reader sees; what she knows the reader knows,—so far as the necklace is concerned. She is not aware that the necklace is paste; therefore, the reader does not know until Madame Loisel is informed. Second, the author deliberately conceals the fact from the reader. He might have indicated or said openly that if Madame Loisel had only known it, the necklace was paste. But had he done so, he would have given away the end for the reader, whose only interest then would have been to see how Madame Loisel "took it."

A GALA DRESS

1. "'Liz'beth.'" This conversational or dynamic manner of beginning catches attention. Notice how economically the author informs the reader of the names of her characters, their stations (as reflected in dialect) and the time of the year.

2. *Matilda Jennings*. Within the first dozen lines all the *dramatis personæ* are introduced.

3. —long, delicate nose, etc. The first hint of differentiation between the sisters and Matilda.

4. "I went to meetin'," etc. The situation begins to unfold. Apparently, only one sister can "go." "Why?" one inquires, and reads to find out.

5. —delicately alert and nervous. The author makes th

NOTES

sisters similar in physical characteristics. Notice the distinguishing traits of each.

6. **"rip the velvet off,"** etc. The situation becomes clearer. Obviously, there is only one dress between them.

7. —**"'peekin' an' pryin',"** etc. Direct method of presenting character: one person indicates her opinion of another.

8. With the final injunction of Elizabeth, the scene closes. The purpose of this first scene, then, is to introduce the characters, present the situation, and arouse curiosity as to what part Matilda will play as well as what will happen at the picnic.

9. Between the close of scene one and the second scene beginning **"To-night the Babcocks had tea very soon,"** the author in her own person describes the general life of the sisters. Notice that she does so in such a way as to stir the reader's sympathy.

10. Matilda causes the door to fly open; she probably falsifies when she says, **"I didn't know you was eatin' supper;"** she counts the slices of bread and measures the butter. The reader dislikes Matilda.

11. Notice the easy logic by which the sisters failed to preserve their secret. To get Matilda out of the way, they asked her into the **"other room,"** forgetting in their nervous eagerness that the dress lay exposed to view.

12. —**"the picnic."** Notice that emphasis is kept on the picnic as well as on the dress.

13. Elizabeth's answer is literally truthful. She wins the reader further by her cleverness in circumventing the attacks of Matilda.

14. **"Some time when it's convenient."** Although Elizabeth wins out in the small conflict, yet Matilda's curiosity is intensified. The reader anticipates a further struggle on her part to probe to the bottom of the little mystery. The scene closes with her speech, **"Well, I'd be much obleeged,"** etc.

15. The author, here, frankly states the case.

16. —**pointed elbows.** By such definite details does the

author keep in mind the pictures of the prim and angular old maids.

17. The third scene exists to show that Matilda and Emily start off together to the picnic, to continue the contrast in character, and to foreshadow disaster to the dress in Matilda's remark, "My! you ain't goin' to wear," etc.

18. Notice the brief yet telling summary of the picnic. Compare the description of the ball in "The Necklace." Too much emphasis on so large a feature would destroy the unity of the immediate drama, in each story. The firing of the cannon is particularly well-mentioned, as it has been introduced earlier in the narrative.

19. —she suddenly stepped aside. The "walking scene" beginning with Emily's remark about the dampness, here attains its climax. Matilda sees a chance to find out about the dress. That the fire-crackers were a natural cause of disaster has been made plausible in the various references to fireworks. The chance, that is, is logical. "A boy jest run" completes the chain of reason.

20. —with an uneasy air. The first stir of conscience in Matilda's soul. Cf. the last sentence in the story. The "walking scene" closes. The remainder of the walk is summarized by the author.

21. —with a letter in her hand. Notice how the author prepares for the turn of fortune in favor of the sisters.

22. The close of the scene between the sisters suggests that Elizabeth will take Emily's advice and wear a crape veil over the burned "flouncin'."

23. —walked home with her. The purpose of this slight scene is to show that although the sisters have conquered, outwardly, in their determination to guard their secret, yet Matilda is still suspicious. The effect on the reader is one of satisfaction that the secret remains, but of fear lest Matilda probe it.

24. The next week. Notice the lapse in time,—only just enough to allow the trunk to make the trip from the West.

NOTES

25. "Well, we will." The brief expression of triumph suggests the innocent revenge the sisters enjoy.

26. —**much talk.** How do you account for the fact that the villagers had not heard of the trunk?

27. **On the Monday following, etc.** This marks the beginning of the final scene. It brings out the confession of the sisters, after the challenge of Matilda in the suspicion held by the villagers that Emily and Elizabeth "didn't get along well"; it shows that they heap coals of fire on Matilda's head in giving her the burned dress, and at the same time offers an example of poetic justice. Matilda would have had an unburned dress had she warned Emily. Finally, the example of the sisters wins the confession from Matilda. The little drama is played. Petty suspicion and jealousy are conquered by open dealing and charity.

UNDER THE LION'S PAW

1. In the first paragraph the author strikes the tone of his story, indicates the time of year, the locality, the state of weather, and the hardships of the plowman. To do so many things easily means excellent economy.

2. Compare this Western dialect with the New England dialect of Miss Wilkins's characters.

3. "schooner." A large covered wagon, used by early settlers. Same as "prairie-schooner."

4. **Haskins and Council.** The characters are now fairly introduced, but according to the methods of the realist it is not yet apparent whether there will be a hero, a heroine or villain. For the realist, a story unfolds directly after the manner of life itself. The realist selects, typifies, suggests; but he does not use the artifices of structure employed by the romanticist who feels the need of forecast, clues, suspense, and coincidence to heighten and intensify his plot.

5. **The story was a terrible one.** The antecedent circumstances of Haskins's life are skilfully inserted in his rehearsal of them to Council.

NOTES

6. —“you fellers wantid ten 'r fifteen dollars,” etc.— Here is sounded the note of realistic tragedy. See how the theme is developed.

7. —**dusted the biscuit-board.** Such realistic detail reveals the author's habits of observation. As a child he had watched his mother go through this very performance. “—childish impressions are the fundamentals upon which an author's fictional output is based,” Mr. Garland has remarked in the story of his life.

8. **Jim Butler.** Observe the summary of his character development.

9. —**his curse.** Suggestive that the place will give Haskins trouble.

10. —**the next Council hitched up,** etc. Study the following dialogue for the casual manner in which he “fixed” Butler. “Why don't you write fiction?” Mr. Garland was once asked. To his response, “I can't manage the dialogue,” the friend replied, “You're lazy, that's all. You must sweat!” This is a perfect specimen of dialogue which reveals character.

11. “**That's the only kind of religion.**” Council follows the Golden Rule, doing as he would be done by. Butler represents the antithesis of his character; in choosing them, the author has made use of representative types.

12. —**the most terrible burdens.** Read carefully this third section of the story, trying to appreciate the struggle of the early settlers.

13. —**the neat garden,** etc. By these signs the author indicates that Haskins has won in the struggle with the land.

14. “**It's the law.**” By putting this argument into the mouth of the unprepossessing Butler, Mr. Garland says plainly enough that the law in this case is not in accord with ethics.

15. —**childish laughter.** Into the warp and woof of stern realities, the entrance of the child is like a thread of gold. The author does not “play up” the theme: “A little child

NOTES

shall lead them," but he takes account of it, as life itself takes account.

16. **"Make out y'r deed an' mor'gage."** Butler has conquered, outwardly; but Haskins has conquered his own soul. He has conquered under the hardest conditions the soil, as he will hereafter conquer in the struggle to pay off the mortgage and acquire his own home.

17. **—his head sunk into his hands.** The realist ends his episode and his story, as though lifted from life. The romantic writer would have had Council play a part toward the close, or would have had the women folk come upon the stage for some purpose, or would have had poetic justice dealt out. The end of this story is related to the beginning only in the somber tone, in the emphasis of labor and misery. It is a study in gray.

ON THE STAIRS

1. In the introductory paragraph the author describes the house by giving its history and its present appearance; then he turns to the class of humanity inhabiting it, pausing for a moment to notice the condition of the street, then to mention the odor. What kind of story, and only what kind, could follow such a beginning?

2. **Three flights up.** He enters, at once, into the dramatic presentation of his story.

3. The main characters have been described in fewer than fifty words.

4. **—jaw waggled loosely.** One of the ugly details marking Mr. Morrison's truth to reality.

5. Superstition revealed in the old woman's speech.

6. **—a little peevishly.** This qualifying phrase hints at the lovelessness of these poor lives.

7. **—put away decent.** A typical remark. The London poor will sacrifice largely to give their dead a decent funeral.

8. **—a certain brightening.** Instead of being depressed,

this creature can think with a certain joy of *her* success in the way of securing a “ ’ansome funeral.”

9. —**the furthest way round.** To prolong the pleased complacency of the widow!

10. **The old, old story.** Because of dearth of other subjects for conversation.

11. —**mutes.** Persons employed by undertakers as attendants at funerals.

12. —**beat the floor with a stick.** This act convinces the reader that a sick person is actually in the room behind the old woman. He is obviously not too ill to call for assistance, yet his old mother discusses the details of the funeral as if he were dead already.

13. —**testy word.** A newcomer, arriving as the old woman goes.

14. —**the sick-room took him in.** Here, then, is the close of the first scene. The stage, the stairway, is now empty.

15. —**followed by the old woman.** The second scene of the play is now enacted. In it, the reader gets the impression that in the doctor’s opinion the young man need not die if he has proper stimulation. Further, that the old woman who may be able to afford some sort of funeral would prefer doing that to helping him get well.

16. **He produced five shillings.** Just as the knocking of the sick man convinces that he is actually present, back of the stairway, so the sight of the five shillings also convinces the reader that money is offered to save his life. It also provokes the reader’s curiosity, acting as a stimulus to suspense.

17. —**the proceeds of six-penny nap.** (Nap is an abbreviation for napoleon, a form of six-handed euchre.) The author conveys by suggestion that the card game is compared with the sin of the old woman. The cynicism is apparent.

18. —**money falling into a tea-pot.** Mrs. Curtis has placed the money, deliberately, where it can be of no earthly value to her son. The author implies the fact by suggestion, making use of sound, again.

19. This paragraph accurately pictures the empty staircase during the night, suggests the sounds reaching the ear of one near the staircase (the reader's unconscious position), and in the final fragment: "Nothing that opened the door" indicates the exit of the young man's spirit.

20. The final scene. Notice that not once does the author need to state that the old lady had been throughout part of the night alone with her dead son. And, moreover, she had experienced only satisfaction,—if we may judge by the "shapeless clump of bonnet." From first to last, her mind is intent on the funeral she can provide.

21. Thanks to the gifts of the shillings she can have the funeral after her own heart! The sordidness of the lives shadowed forth in this dramatic sketch is too obvious for comment. The ghoulishness of the old lady is particularly well done. From beginning to end the method is "objective." The reader sees the characters, hears them talk, and watches them act. Thus, he comes to his own conclusion, without the aid of the writer, as to their thoughts.

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

1. This first paragraph is an excellent example of the functions performed by the modern short-story opening. It introduces the chief character, gives the immediate scene and the larger setting, and strikes the tone of the story. The Catawba River indicates North Carolina as the actual geography.

2. After the initial picture the author states in summary fashion the antecedent circumstances which have led to Goree's disreputability.

3. Into the summary of preceding events, the author skillfully introduces the thread of interest, which will form the complication—the matter of the feud.

4. Further details of the past are given through Goree's reminiscence.

NOTES

5. The description of Pike Garvey affords preparation for the chief incident of the story.

6. —**took a shot at them.** Another suggestive detail as to Garvey's character.

7. —**in the halls of his fathers.** The author has now presented all that is needed of the foregoing circumstances, and has built up a strong foundation for the immediate story.

8. **A cloud of dust.** Notice that the author loses no time in attacking the business of the story. Even as Goree looks, he sees the approaching carryall.

9. Note the essentially truthful portrayal of Mrs. Garvey, with respect to the influence of environment. "Man tends to absorb the color of his surroundings, in the manner of the chameleon," says Donn Byrne, one of the best of present day writers. "The cowherd's face becomes bovine. The eyes of the master mechanic look at you with the metallic expression of a steam gauge."

10. —**soundness of mind, etc.** O. Henry carefully emphasizes Garvey's peculiarity, or insanity, by way of making logical the bargain which follows.

11. The dialect is a faithful representation of the mountaineer's speech.

12. —**wants to buy.** Notice how capitally the author handles suspense, how he delays telling what "Missis Garvey wants to buy."

13. "**Thar's two hundred dollars.**" The initial incident reaches its climax.

14. —**the rattling of the poker chips.** The author skillfully allows the intrusion of the gambling scene, knowing that Goree will be influenced by the sounds therefrom.

15. **Beads of moisture.** Signs of Goree's inner struggle.

16. —**like a drunkard.** An observation showing O. Henry's interest in verisimilitude.

17. Goree's inheritance as a gentleman causes him impulsively to reject the offer.

18. "**Don't be in a hurry.**" His decayed manhood, his

passion for the gaming table and for drink are too strong. He accepts the offer.

19. —placed it carefully in his pocket. The end of the initial incident.

20. —“your recently purchased enemy.” Again observe that no time is lost; the action moves on continuously; the feudal enemy appears just in the nick of time, and yet naturally.

21. Notice the picture of Colonel Abner Coltrane, and his typical but distinctive frock coat and high hat.

22. The previous allusion to Garvey's having served a term of two years is here neatly and logically followed up.

23. Garvey's speech furnishes a strong ominous note of impending tragedy. A less skilful writer would now finish the story by having Garvey kill the Colonel, so removing his own enemy and receiving full value for the price of the feud. But O. Henry knew that this solution was too simple, too ‘easy.’

24. “Go! Go!” screamed Goree. This is needed to keep the reader's sympathy for Goree, and to make credible his later climactic act which, from what so far has occurred, would not be convincing.

25. —to the courthouse. Fine and logical continuity of action. Goree hastens to the game.

26. At three o'clock, etc. Obviously logical result.

27. In the previous brief paragraphs O. Henry prepares for Goree's further behavior. The drunken sleep was a logical cause for his lapse of memory. With excellent naturalness the author again introduces the colonel, thus evincing that mark of genius which constructs the larger and more completely satisfying tragedy.

28. The colonel's service predisposes the reader in his favor.

29. This speech indicates that Goree has forgotten all the recent events just recounted.

30. The dropping of the feud is explained in that the colonel knew Yancey was “down in the world.”

NOTES

31. If Goree had remembered the presence of the feud he might have remembered also that he had sold his interest in it. The psychology is good.

32. —**maudlin tears . . . remorse and shame.** A true picture of the drunkard.

33. —**thoughts and memories were returning.** A clue to the fact that he will ultimately recall the selling of the feud.

34. Change of place well managed. The dramatic climax is Goree's acceptance of the colonel's invitation.

35. Memory returns gradually.

36. —**brooding silence.** Goree is still troubled.

37. The author's description of the scenery conveys the new setting, at the same time it contributes to suspense.

38. Garvey's appearance means the near approach of tragedy.

39. —**"I believed him irresponsible."** A further reason for the reader's desire to see the colonel unharmed.

40. —**his face had lost its color.** Yancey Goree begins to realize the situation.

41. The speech shows that Yancey has found a way to save the colonel.

42. Compare the description of Goree's clothes with that of the colonel's (See note 21).

43. Goree's scheme is now presented to the reader. It was the only way out. He had sold his feud; he had accepted his former enemy's invitation. The consequences were inevitable; by his own act he must right matters.

44. The author neatly implies that by a change of clothes the two men might be mistaken, one for the other.

45. —**"ride about ten feet in the rear."** Goree takes no chances on the colonel also being killed through too close proximity to himself.

46. —**opposite the family burying ground.** Another exhibition of genius, this closing the tragedy at the ancestral graveyard. Recall the former mention of the burial ground and note the linking up of details.

NOTES

47. Goree's death is the climax of the action, and the dénouement or solution of the complication.

48. The final paragraph is the author's comment by way of conclusion.

The editor regards "The Blackjack Bargainer" as a flawless specimen of the story-teller's art.

THE WELL

1. The setting and two chief characters are introduced at once.

2. Carr's speech reveals in part the situation.

3. **Olive.** The third main character. All of importance, observe, are presented within the first two hundred words or so.

4. In these initial paragraphs the author has given, along with the initial struggle or incident, the already existing situation. The dialogue is dramatic; it reveals character better than description or analysis could portray it, and it starts the action of the story. Suspense is produced, the reader wondering, "What will Jem do about it?"

5. The dots here mean the omission of an important feature of the story. Jem threw Carr into the well. Why did the author omit so important a step of the action?

6. "**No more than he deserved.**" A pointer as to what has occurred.

7. **The well.** The description of the well becomes emphatic by being placed at the beginning of the new division (II).

8. —**eying with some disfavor**, etc. Another clue.

9. "**And make the acquaintance of Truth.**" Implicit reference to the proverb, "Truth lies at the bottom of a well." But also used suggestively. What particular truth?

10. —**bracken.** Undergrowth of large ferns.

11. —"**waiting to spring out on me.**" Olive's speech helps to keep prominent the feeling of gloom and foreboding.

12. **"Has anything been heard,"** etc. The girl's question about Wilfred is the author's first open indication that Carr has disappeared.

13. —**with startling bitterness.** Jem's remorse indicated.

14. —**"loafer . . . cur . . . liar."** Further attempts to vindicate himself in his own judgment.

15. **"'Jem, help me out.'"** See the same words above and observe the two meanings, also the suggestion of the supernatural.

16. Olive's dropping her bracelet down the well furnishes the dramatic climax.

17. —**with horror.** In one flash Jem has divined the probable outcome.

18. Olive creates a picture which, in fancy, must have presented itself often to Jem.

19. **"Pity it wasn't filled in long ago."** A definite expression of remorse.

20. —**a bunch of keys.** Dramatically indicative of what lay beneath.

21. **It caught a third time.** Again notice the use of suggestion. To what did it catch?

22. —**fell into a troubled sleep.** At the close of the second division of the narrative, the reader still wonders, **"What will Jem do?"** But the first cause of curiosity has been satisfied (See note 4).

23. —**father lay dead.** By such contributory detail the gloomy tone of the story is maintained.

24. **"Everything ready, George?"** This question is a good example of the author's economy. The reader learned near the close of the second division that Jem visited the stables. Why? The answer was not obvious, but the question here shows that certain arrangements had been made then.

25. The reader is startled at the suggestion that Bob, seemingly, will descend into the well.

26. Benson indicates by his **"No, no!"** that he himself will go down.

NOTES

27. "I've never seen you look so." The strain is telling of Jem's appearance.
28. —the candle-stick fell, etc. The tragic impulse increases and the dénouement is more and more inevitable.
29. He sat for so long. To gain courage?
30. —scream of unutterable horror. Here the author skillfully leaves part of the story to the reader's interpretation. Had Jem previously determined to bring up the body? Or did he do so on impulse while in the water? Or was the cry of horror drawn from him because he recognized that he had accidentally started the body up?
31. —rope tore through his hands. A logical outcome.
32. —all else was silence. Jem has met his own death when as Wilfred Carr came to his end. Poetic justice renders this dénouement so inevitable that the story could conclude no other way. Jem Benson was not so villainous as to forfeit the reader's sympathy. He has held it, in fact, by virtue of his superiority over Wilfred Carr. Yet because he had sinned in a way to give Carr,—and that Carr was,—a very real weapon, and because he had attempted to avert justice by more sin, he met a deserved fate.

THE COMFORTER

1. The author begins at the right point. An amateur could have found it tempting to write about the operation. The word "sympathy" strikes the note at once. The story is keyed properly. The narrator is the first person, as if Miss Jordan herself were talking. Look over the preceding stories and decide who the assumed "narrators" are.
2. The description of the hospital, in addition to the clear placing of the locale, is so given as to convey efficiency—but not sympathy.
3. —softening a little. This link is needed to establish connection between the professional and the hygienic, on

NOTES

the one hand, and the thought of "The Comforter" on the other.

4. —**in my last hours.** This paragraph emphasizes the patient's state of mind, the feeling of injury, of irritability, of convalescence, and her alleviating sense of humor.

5. **The Comforter.** But the patient does not know who or what "The Comforter" is. Suspense is used. The reader is alert, also, to find out.

6. —**when I heard a soft tap.** The meditations of the sick one have been of just the right length to allow for the coming of the child. The gait of the narrative is deliberate but not too slow. The picture of "The Comforter" is given well.

7. —**his unconscious model.** Psychologically true: children ape their elders unknowingly, and only the hospital staff were his associates.

8. **The pain in my ear.** Effect of "The Comforter's" presence. He is true to his name and fulfills the nurse's implied recommendation of him.

9. —**fallen asleep.** This marks the end of a fully developed scene, in which the little boy's personality is sympathetically displayed. The fact that the narrator delights in him with stories suggests, again, that Miss Jordan may have been drawing upon her own experience, real or fancied.

10. —**etched there by pain.** In repose, the child bears the marks of disease which his glowing entrance had obscured.

11. **Miss Smith came back.** The transition is neatly made. No superfluous time passes.

12. —**her cold face softening wonderfully.** The effect of the child on the patient was obvious; now it is visible with respect to the nurse. His habitual influence as well as his immediate influence convinces the reader that he is a real "Comforter."

13. —**departed for the night.** The return of the nurse following his departure, is the preliminary to an explanation of his case. This expository matter is given at the moment the reader most desires it.

14. —“we can’t save him.” From the reader’s point of view this is the dramatic climax of this “character” story, as it is the high moment from the patient’s angle.
15. —anything for a little boy. Testimony of their devotion.
16. —very soon. The second visit of “The Comforter” follows. The little play-episode that ensues reveals further imitative powers.
17. —serenely unconscious. Sincere imitator that he was, he had no desire to be thought amusing, as he himself did not mean to be amusing.
18. But what it had made of him! Growth comes through sympathy and understanding and responsibility.
19. “I’ll take you.” The promise of the patient is a link to further scenes with “The Comforter.”
20. I saw him no more that day. He was busy with his comforting.”
21. This paragraph is one in which the narrator partly bridges over the time. The following paragraph shows that in the three days’ wait, the little boy was true to his rôle of Comforter.”
22. Was it a joyous day the narrator planned for the child?
23. The inevitable rose. This distinguishing adornment is a fitting one for the child’s personality.
24. —rosy memory. That is, the explanation was fiction rather than fact!
25. The paragraph showing his pleasure in the aquarium specimens also keeps him true to type in his unconscious poses.
26. —concentrated their attention. The appeal of the child is seen to be general, as well as immediate and constant. “Everybody loves him,” as we say.
27. Jimmie Murphy reposing on it. Here is a master touch. The incident, briefly suggested, indicates that “The Comforter” has by no means forgotten Jimmie in his present bliss; that the old man, though irascible, is also brought

into subjection, and that the child has an imaginative mind

28. —floating back to me. "The Comforter's" off-day is over.

29. —the busy month that followed. Passing of time briefly indicated, that the story links may be joined closely

30. —a whole month at the old farm. An amateur writer would have been tempted, also, to give such a month in detail. But this author knows that one such experience given rather fully is sufficient for the present artistic purpose.

31. —a week after my second visit. The definite indication of time is warning of a definite event.

32. —it lacked the presence of a little boy. Again, the effect of "The Comforter" is indicated negatively,—a suggestion of the world without him.

33. In this paragraph, presenting the dead child and his room, typical of his interests and pleasures, there is small attempt to "work on" the reader's sympathy. But the picture moves one by its very objective appearance.

34. —a child was crying. There was, now, no attendant "Comforter."

35. The final sentence closes fittingly the short and brave life of the little boy. He has justified his name.

"MOLLY MCGUIRE, FOURTEEN"

1. This author knows the value of suspense and strikes at once a cause for making the reader wonder. Why did the general breathe "Ah!" Who was "Molly"? Follow the gradual unfolding of the details about "Molly" in the succeeding paragraphs.

2. —waffles. A small detail, which contributes to the local color.

3. "Duval." Here the author introduces a second line of interest. Watch the gradual combining of the lines of interest.

4. This brief paragraph gives the setting,—the Virginia

Military Institute. In addition, it indicates a third line of interest: the Alumni festivities.

5. **Finals.** Logically connected with the third line of interest.

6. **Later that morning.** The small scene thus introduced links itself directly with the opening scene. The expected letter arrives. The reader knows that "Molly" is making good, but still wonders *what* he is making good for.

7. —**chief of staff.** By the mention of so important a personage the author again hints at the importance of the occasion.

8. —**the spirit of V. M. I.** Captain Greene shows, in the paragraphs which follow, the loyalty typical of all the sons of the institution. In poignant manner he summarizes and describes the accomplishments of the "little kingdom" so as to put the reader in sympathy with the incidents of the narrative. He is making the "human appeal," so necessary to the success of a story.

9. —**the Molly McGuires.** From the better known illustrations, the author turns at once to the chief subject of the present tale.

10. **Bolling.** Introduced for the purpose of throwing the reader off the trail. But doubtless every reader begins to suspect that "Molly, 14" was somehow connected with Duval or with another person who has not revealed himself.

11. —**dismissed the problem.** The author loses no time. Having dismissed, momentarily, the "Molly" problem, he turns at once to the business about Duval, which has been suggested above.

12. —**"the twentieth reunion."** The reader has a stronger clue than before, as he has been told that this is the twentieth reunion since the arsenal was blown up, and is now informed that it is Duval's twentieth reunion. Do you, as a reader, guess too easily what the outcome will be?

13. —**quick flush.** That is, as revealed later, because Duval had not taken his degree.

14. —**"conspiracy."** Evidently, the conspiracy has to do

with some project concerning Duval, who has been heralded from the beginning of the story, and who has now been presented with sufficient skill to make the reader desire, also, that the pleasant conspiracy succeed.

15. —“**unfortunate last day.**” Now comes the gradual unfolding of that last day’s happenings, and the Duval situation begins to clear up.

16. **The biggest day.** Again the author strikes the third line of interest: the Alumni spirit.

17. The description, given at length, holds much of human interest, not only for the Alumni of V. M. I., but also for all other readers. It is universal in its nature.

18. **When the last gray-clad boy.** The narrative is resumed without loss of time.

19. —“**about Duval.**” The story is forthcoming, now that the reader has been prepared to receive it and has become sufficiently curious over it.

20. —**put aside his cigar.** He has heard the story, and through him the reader.

21. **The evening events, etc.** The thread of interest which deals with the Alumni is again resumed.

22. “**It’s about the arsenal.**” Having given one story to the reader, the author now announces that the story about the arsenal will be rehearsed. Notice that the superintendent is the narrator, in each case.

23. **Bolling interrupted.** Such interruptions as Captain Greene makes use of are natural. This is what happens in real life when one tells a story; one is asked to repeat or to explain or is interrupted with surprised comment.

24. The letter explains the bills received at the beginning of the story.

25. —“**there never was a fourteenth.**” Then the signature of “Molly, 14” indicates a mysterious addition.

26. **And the toast was drunk standing.** The whole situation in regard to “Molly” has been disclosed. The reader now suspects that the personality of “Molly” will be revealed.

NOTES

27. **The general went at once to his office.** What is the purpose of the scene between the General and Duval?

28. **Final exercises.** The line of the Alumni interest is taken up once more.

29. —**that day.** From the general picture, the author comes back to the particular occasion.

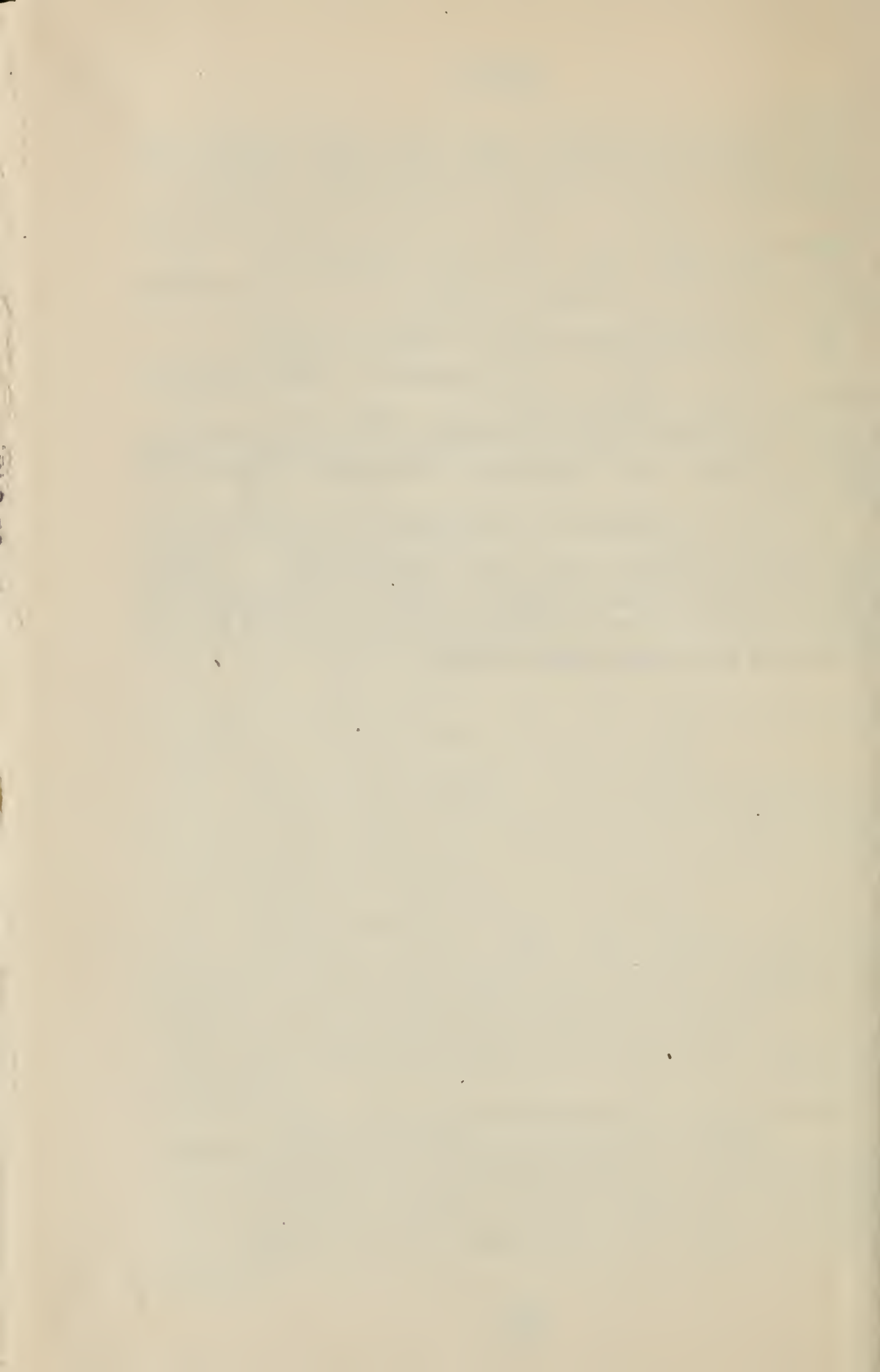
30. —**a white-haired woman.** Duval's mother.

31. "**It's all right. . . .**" The joke is finally forgiven. The Duval line nears its close.

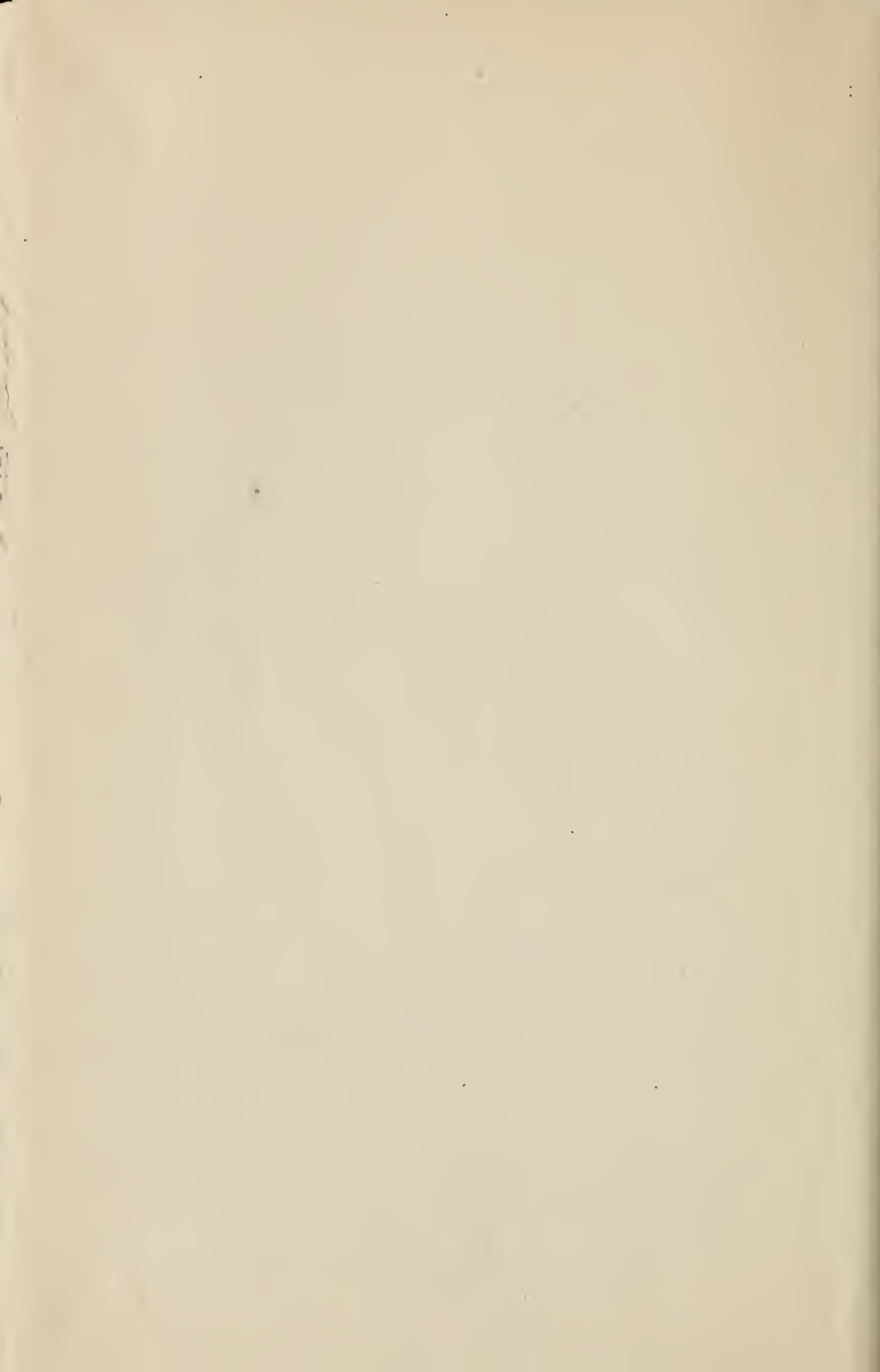
32. **The hand Duval had pressed.** The closing sentence clinches the fact that Duval and "Molly, 14" were one and the same.

This story exemplifies the combination of three lines of interest, all working to an inevitable conclusion. Besides being well constructed in plot, however, its characters are living; the local color is perfect, having been gained at first hand; and the human appeal satisfies.

(3)







10 4791DA 5525
BR
11/02 30910-53 NLE



PROPERTY OF:
DAVID O. McKAY LIBRARY
BYU-IDAHO
REXBURG ID 83460-0405

